

木村心一

Shinichi Kimura

これは
ゾンビ
ですか？

4
うん、
先生が最強だよ！



ファンタジア文庫

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Please send any and all comments to nanodesuadmin@googlegroups.com

Kore wa
Zombie
Desu ka?



Haruna ▶

Broken Heart Magnum

Lyrics: Genius Bishoujo

Composition: Demon Baron Masou Shoujo

Arrangement: Haruna-chan (cute)

Singer: Haruna-chan

Spoken (I'm gonna spread wasabi on your contact lenses!)


The glasses that appeared in the middle of
the setting sun,
I peered at them optically with eyes that
have already dried.
You always popped all the ikura*, didn't you?
You ate potato chips with that hand so stop
touching the controller.
Hydroplaning.
Get naked and beg me! Break your nails!
Call air guitaring "eya guitaring"
And then break your air nails!
I'll always be by your side.
If you die~~~

Haruna: We got on the drama CD and this is our
CD debut!

Ayumu: Yeah yeah... wait they seriously made it?!

Yes,
it's our
debut
singles





Sera▶

Crazy Snowman

Lyrics: Seraphim
Composition: Haruna-chan
Arrangement: Seraphim
Singer: Seraphim
Produced by Haruna-chan

I want to see you. I just want to see you.
I'm going to destroy this snowman.
These unspoken feelings.
I just want to make a mess of you, but,
The miracle of seeing your face, will not happen again.
So then, who should I chop up?
Even if I want to cut your face to pieces, uh-
If I meet you again, I'll make these feelings known.
Even though your face is so disgusting it makes me want to vomit,
Today, I'll paste a photo of you to this snowman.



ラーメン 300円
チャーメン 300円
カレー 300円
うどん 300円
そば 300円
冷やし中華 300円
冷やしうどん 300円
冷やしそば 300円
冷やしチャーメン 300円
冷やしラーメン 300円

◀Tomonori

"Together with my Friend"*

Lyrics: Tomonori was too exhausted after the first half so the second half was Haruna-chan
Composition: Haruna-chan
Arrangement: Haruna-chan
Singer: Yoshida Yuki
Feat. Haruna-chan

Push forwards on your own path!
Come now, trust me, and take my hand.
Trust is not depending on others,
But rather deciding for yourself.
I won't let go of your hand.
There's a painting you have to buy for me.
Thank you. That's a million yen. Thank you. Paid in twenty installments.
Trust is not depending on others,
But rather deciding for yourself.
Please don't get me wrong.
No no, this isn't a scam. Don't screw with me.

* There's a pun here where the kanji for "together" was replaced with the kanji for "friend." This puts emphasis on "friend," even though then the title is technically a bit incoherent.



Yuu ▶



Haruna: Why didn't it sell well?! It was packed with so much love and friendship!

Sera: Hm. Maybe there was a problem with the pricing?

Tomonori: And I... even wore a swimsuit...

Yuu: Sorry. If I could just talk and attract customers...

Haruna: I have no idea what was wrong with it.

Sera: Haruna's song was pretty good too, I thought.

Tomonori: And I... even wore a swimsuit... to a ramen shop...

Yuu: Maybe it wasn't advertised enough?

Ayumu: Huh??? Am I the only one that thinks this was an obvious outcome...?

▶ Huh? Yuu's song? The truth will be revealed in this volume!



PROLOGUE

**K...KARASHI? ...ARE
YOU... MAKING
MUSTARD PASTE?**

IT'D BE NICE IF ALL
OUR SCHOOL FESTI-
VALS COULD START
HAPPENING AT NIGHT.



LIFE IS LIKE A FULL COURSE MEAL.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO EAT THEIR FOOD SLOWLY, AND THOSE
WHO WOLF IT DOWN AND WAIT ANXIOUSLY FOR THE NEXT
COURSE.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO WANT TO EAT THE SAME MEAL EVERY
DAY, AND THOSE WHO WANT TO TRY DIFFERENT FOODS.

NOW THEN... IF SOMEONE WHO'S USUALLY ON THE EATING SIDE
SUDDENLY FINDS HIMSELF ON THE COOKING SIDE, ARE THERE
THINGS THAT HE SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO?

WELL, IT'S SIMPLE, REALLY. YOU SHOULD JUST TAKE THE THINGS
YOU'VE ALREADY EATEN AND MAKE THEM JUST LIKE THAT.

FOOD WITH WEIRD SPICES, OR HUGE AMOUNTS OF DRESSING, OR
ANY OTHER FOOD OF A MYSTERIOUS, UNIDENTIFIABLE NATURE IS
FOOD THAT CAN'T REALLY BE ENJOYED. NORMAL FOOD IS THE
BEST FOOD.

WHAT AM I TRYING TO SAY HERE, REALLY? WELL...

MAKING OUR SCHOOL FESTIVAL DISPLAY A SWAT TRAINING
GROUNDS... THAT'S WAY TOO SPICY, AND NOBODY WOULD BE
ABLE TO EAT THAT.



Prologue Part 1

The second semester had started, and autumn had arrived.

The annoying cicadas stopped chirping, and the sound of the wind and rustling dry leaves gently caressed my ears. This was what people would call the “voice of autumn,” wasn’t it?

I stared out the window, sunk deep in thought.

Everyone had things in their past they would like to erase.

Why did I do that back then? What could I have done to avoid that? There were times when people thought about things like that.

And I was no exception. Even zombies had times when they wanted to erase past failures.

They said that you couldn’t become an adult without making mistakes, but was that really true?

Those things that you couldn’t take back anymore... didn’t they just hold you back from growing up?

Ahh, I really wanted to erase that incident...

Geez... why did I... why did I do... *sigh*.

It was a season that was good for sighing.

Summer vacation had ended, so I thought that everyone in the class would be in a lazy daze, but... right now there were quite a few voices being thrown around the room.

The start of the second semester also marked the opening of various events. For now, we had to prepare for the school festival in October.

The school festival was a time when the students could do whatever they wanted, and was a really, really fun annual occasion.

And every time the school festival came up, each and every class always fought over what exhibit they planned to make for it.

Even if they didn't really have any concrete ideas in mind.

... And naturally, my own class was no different.

All the candidates for possible exhibits were listed on the board, and all the students were staring at the board together.

The teacher in charge, nicknamed "No Personality," had abandoned his duties and was just looking blankly out the window.

And the person in control of the class was not the teacher, or the class representative, but...

"I really still think we should build a SWAT team training ground!"

A girl who looked like a young middle schooler stood on the teacher's platform and smacked the word "SWAT" that had been written on the board.

An ahoge stretched out from the top of her head of shoulder-length chestnut hair and blipped from side to side.

She had the mouth of a brat who spent all his time playing in the mud, and eyes that overflowed with an almost annoying amount of curiosity. Her chest seemed like it had almost given up on growing any further, and her butt was on the small side.

She was a student at Matelis Magical Academy, an almost made-up sounding school from the magical world Virie, and she was in this world to earn credits from her school for exterminating monsters.

She was the masou shoujo Haruna.

Ever since she filled in for the teaching instructor once, Haruna had begun hanging around the classroom just as if she was one of my classmates.

Although, it's not like she actually came for class; whenever there was some event she would just show up like a hyena, do whatever she wanted, and then disappear. That's the kind of "classmate" she was.

"Haruna-sensei, can we really pull off a SWAT team?"

"I definitely can! I'll be using a real Kalashnikov! Even if it's loaded with paintballs only!"

"K... Karashi? ... are you... making mustard paste?"¹

Hiramatsu Taeko, the honors student with ponytails who sat right in front of the teacher's platform, didn't seem to understand what Haruna was saying and cocked her neck to the side.

I couldn't help but suddenly imagine the SWAT team grinding mustard seeds.

¹ Mustard is "karashi," hence setting up this pun.

I wonder how many people in the class actually knew what a Kalashnikov was. It was originally a person's name, but it was famously the name of a type of automatic rifle. Also, I didn't think the SWAT team actually used Kalashnikovs.

Naturally, Haruna's "SWAT team performance" idea was rejected. When it came to class exhibits like this, it was a much safer and likely option to do a haunted house or a maid café.

So, for these type of event discussions, there were really two kinds of people.

That is, there were the ones who were really assertive about their opinions, and the ones who just went with the flow.

For example, the spiky-haired Orito who was standing up and singing the praises of maid cafés belonged to the former category, while you could say that the pretty ponytailed girl Hiramatsu was in the latter.

As for me...

"If we're going to do something, we should do a cosplay café of some kind."

I was in the former.

At my sudden proactive statement, everyone in the class looked at me with expressions of astonishment.

Certainly, a semester ago, I wasn't the kind of person who people would expect to make a statement like that.

"A SWAT team café, huh?!"

Haruna thrust a piece of chalk at me and spoke.

“No that’s not it at-” “Shut up! Be quiet!”

Haruna drowned out my objection and I shrugged.

“Ugh... fine, whatever. Let’s do that then.”

“Well, the guests will be the SWAT team and we’ll be the terrorists then!”

“Wouldn’t that be a terrorist café?!”

A few of the male students voiced that objection. I see, so the Kalashnikovs were used by the terrorists.

“Alright, then let’s try it out! You over there! The one who looks like a tissue box lid!”

Haruna said something that could have been taken right out of the opening of an old comedy skit, and Orito obeyed, leaving the room. He sure picked up pretty quick that Haruna was referring to him. Although, if you took that tissue box lid off it would be a bit prickly.

“It’s me! Send the list to the portable device! It’s our only clue!”

I heard Orito acting out a desperate-sounding scene from the hallway. Wait, didn’t he sound more like a counterterrorism unit than a SWAT unit?

Clack clack clack clack clack clack clack...

Orito rushed back into the room, which had fallen into a quiet shock, pretending like he was holding a gun. Haruna twisted his arms up and brought him to his knees.

“Sit there with your hands on your head!”

So it really seemed that the café side was the SWAT team.

“Optic Blast!”

Orito’s glasses sparkled.

“OoooOOoooo...” Haruna looked puzzled, almost as if she was about to start explaining Kenbutou². It seemed that things had turned out differently from what she had been planning.

Orito also twisted his own neck firmly.

“Ugh. This is terrible.”

“... Hm. You’re right.”

Orito returned to his own seat and Haruna to the front of the class.

Everyone ignored that spectacle. Rather than a past event people wanted to erase, it was one they just didn’t want to see in the first place.

“W-What happened to the mustard?”

Only Hiramatsu seemed to have been waiting for them to make mustard paste, but even Haruna seemed to want to pretend like that little skit had never happened.

In the end, we decided that a SWAT café was impossible.

² Some swordsmanship style that uses unsharpened swords.

Someone suggested we do a yakisoba shop. Someone else wanted to do a pancake stand. Others proposed similar ideas. If this went on... it looked like we were going to end up doing some kind of café.

“All of those are just so unoriginal...”

Wrapped up in a curtain by the window, the teacher in charge, nicknamed “Contentless,” muttered to himself.

Suddenly, everyone turned towards him. “So what are you telling us to do then?” they seemed to want to say.

“School festivals are pretty unoriginal events in the first place, aren’t they?”

Orito fiddled with his spiky hair as he said that.

Certainly that was true. Every single year everyone just did the same old thing. Or rather, they couldn’t do anything else.

We racked our brains to see if we could come up with something a bit different.

Every class ended up doing something similar.

They would have a food stand, or could put on a play, or make some kind of display.

Wasn’t that enough?

At least I thought it was. I wasn’t really interested by any of this, but at the same time that just made me want to walk around and see all the unoriginal displays in all the places.

The haunted houses, the plays, the musical performances, the arts and crafts displays, the food stands..... the food stands.....

Food stands I wouldn't be able to do anything about. I was a dead person, a zombie, so I would faint if I stood out under the sun. It would be great if everything happened in the school building, but if there were food stands outside, then my hopes of going around and visiting every exhibit would have come to nothing.

"I wish we could just do everything at night..."

I felt looks of shock concentrate on me at my grumblings, just like they had before.

What are you all looking at?

"That's it, Aikawa!"

Orito's eyes were sparkling from within his glasses.

"Yea! We should make it a night festival!"

Haruna's eyes were also sparkling.

"... That..... might be fun."

Even the usually gloomy-looking Hiramatsu seemed to be a bit excited.

"At night... huh? Hm, I'll talk to the vice principal about it for now and see."

The homeroom teacher didn't try to calm the students down as they were getting worked up over the idea of a night festival, but just gave out a yawn and muttered slowly.

Wait wait wait wait...

“It’s not like just one class’s opinion would be able to change-“

And it did.

The idea of the night festival I had accidentally suggested swept through the school and was judged as a great idea.

Prologue Part 2

An emergency school-wide assembly was called, and the vice principle spoke grateful words.

“Your passionate opinions have been heard!”

The vice principle almost howled into the microphone with tears threatening to fall from his eyes, and started with that one sentence.

Our vice principle was the kind of person who let the students make a lot of decisions.

A school was not made by its teachers, but was something advanced by its students. Field trip destinations, the competitions in the athletic festivals, and even class changes... if the students were assertive with their opinions, the vice principle would listen to them and enact them. He was just that kind of devoted guy.

“Even if the people in the neighborhood complain, I’ll take responsibility and go around begging them for forgiveness, so just go wild! That is all! My heart has been moved!”

I really doubted that the people in the neighborhood would be satisfied by just him begging them for forgiveness, but the students ignored that and rejoiced at the thought of a night festival.

Well, it was true that just the thought of being able to do something at school during the night was pretty exciting.

Overcome with emotion, the vice principal got off the stage, and was replaced by our own “No Personality.”

“Ahh, I’m the homeroom teacher for the first year class C, Kurisu. The vice principal might have said that, but if you went wild it would be a problem... so please act in moderation, or else we really might have to end the school festival midway.”

Ah, our homeroom teacher’s name was Kurisu? And with the warning our own homeroom teacher gave to the now celebrating students, the emergency assembly came to a close.

Prologue Part 3

And like that, it was quickly decided that this year's school festival would take place at night.

We decided to return to our classroom while everyone was still excited and decide on what we were going to do for the festival.

Haruna didn't even wait for everyone to sit back down, before...

"Well if we're gonna do it at night, then we have to do a SWATted house!"

She said it like "haunted house"! Jesus, just give up with the SWAT stuff already!

"How about... a monster... café?"

That was Hiramatsu's suggestion. I see. That way both the people who wanted a haunted house and the people who wanted a cosplay café would be satisfied, and it was also not something I could see the other classes doing.

"Hm. That sounds like a pretty good idea."

"Monsters..."

Haruna groaned. It seemed like she still wanted to do something themed around the SWAT team. I could read it clearly on her face.

"... Original monsters... who wear SWAT team outfits?"

Hiramatsu added that on, looking pretty unsure about herself.

"Alright, let's do that then!"

A smile suddenly shone on Haruna's face.

"A monster café, hmm...?"

Our homeroom teacher was staring out the window like always. He smiled and continued.

"Maybe it'll be like the one that time?"

"Which time?"

Orito looked puzzled.

"You know, like the one that time when everyone turned into animals."

The homeroom teacher, real name "Kurusu Takeshi," just chuckled to himself.

... That's strange.

None of the other students seemed to know what he was talking about.

... And that was to be expected.

Certainly, there was a time when this school was threatened when all the people inside almost turned into animals. But Haruna and I used the power of the masou shoujo to erase that memory from everyone's heads.

So there was no reason anybody should remember that incident. Not anybody.

I glared at our homeroom teacher with a grim expression on my face.



WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT THE SWAT TEAM?! THEY'RE A SPECIALLY TRAINED TEAM, AFTER ALL! THEY HAVE GUNS BUT STILL FIGHT WITH SWORDS, AND IN THE LAST TEN MINUTES THEY CAN GET INTO A GIANT ROBOT TOO! WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?! I HAVE NO IDEA. YOU CALL THEM "RIDERS" EVEN THOUGH THEY DON'T HAVE MOTOCYCLES, THEY'RE ALWAYS ON THE SAME PLANET BUT PEOPLE STILL CALL THEM "PROTECTORS OF THE GALAXY"... THEY MUST BE SUPER POPULAR, RIGHT?! EVERYONE REALLY WANTS TO SEE A TRANSFORMED SWAT TEAM, BUT I'M SERIOUSLY JUST SO AMAZED BY AYUMI'S STUPIDITY THAT I CAN'T EVEN CALL HIM AN IDIOT ANYMORE. WELL, NO, I HAVE. MANY TIMES. BUT DON'T WORRY! YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE SOME TRANSFORMATIONS! IT'S NOT AYUMI. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE A MUCH CUTER TRANSFORMATION, SO BE GRATEFUL! NOW THEN! BURN MY MAJESTIC FORM RIGHT INTO YOUR BRAINS!



CHAPTER 1

**WAAAAAH~~! HOW COULD
I LOOOOOOSSSE~~~?!**

HUEH? THE SWAT TEAM DOESN'T TRANSFORM?

Chapter 1: Part 1

Thursday, the fifth of October. The school festival was on the following Saturday.

I was a zombie, so once school ended I would always hang around until the sun set. I usually waited by myself, but sometimes I spent time with Orito (when he was free) or Tomonori from next door instead.

But lately the classroom had been much livelier after school. Everyone was hard at work on the preparations for the school festival.

“All right, Aikawa, try your best.”

“Sorry about this. I have plans.”

“Ahh, it’s fine, I’m pretty free anyways.”

Well, it hadn’t been long since the school day ended. We had been eagerly making an elaborate colored paper collage for the festival, but it seemed that the other students got bored with it halfway through. They knew I stayed late every day, so they just left the rest to me and went home early.

I found myself alone as I made a flashy sign for our monster café. Hiramatsu and Orito were assigned costume construction duty, and Tomonori was in another class, so she obviously couldn’t help.

So like that... I found myself working on it without any help.

Frankly, it was just annoying. ‘All I have to do is to paint red letters on this thing, right?’ And as I worked with that idea in mind, I soon found myself beyond the point of no return.

Let me just say it one more time: it was just annoying.

There were other students who seemed to simply enjoy the fact that they were making something. They chatted merrily about life as their hands moved deftly to complete their tasks.

“Aikawaaa~~.”

A student who sounded like she was having way too much fun came my way.

Her eyes were filled to bursting with energy and her lips curved up into a happy smile. That short-haired girl had both her hands on her hips.

“Ahh... Tomonori. You look way really happy for some reason.”

“Someone bought a cell phone for me! Give me your number~~.”

Tomonori took out the newest cell phone model and gave me a smile. I’d always thought that a cell phone is just a cell phone regardless of the model, but for some reason I really wanted a new cell phone when I saw that thing.

“Ah, sure... Your parents buy you that?”

Tomonori shook her head.

“Nyah. I got it so I could carry out my missions smoothly~.”

I got Tomonori’s e-mail address and number using the IR receivers on our cell phones.

“Yay! Got it~~.”

Tomonori smiled as she hugged her cell phone happily to herself.

“Aren’t you also preparing for the school festival? Is it really okay to be loafing around like this?”

“Yeah! I got that done already! Is Aikawa done too?”

Tomonori leaned in to take a peek, then let out a mournful groan.

After all, I was nowhere close to finished, even though the school festival was just two days away.

“Hey, Tomonori.”

“D-don’t call me Tomonori! I’m a girl!”¹

“Why exactly am I here making this thing?”

“M-maybe for a sense of accomplishment...? You know, like when you climb a mountain.”

“I see... I guess that might be true.”

“Right? Just think about that fresh feeling you’ll get when you finish that. It’ll be just like the sound of a Sega Saturn starting up.”

“Your idea of ‘fresh’ is way too hard to understand!”

“Aikawa should try his best to make a sign that will feel as good as hitting a huge single-run home run.”

¹ The funny thing is that Tomonori says the line “I’m a girl!” using completely male pronouns and sentence endings.

I probably looked incredibly bored. Tomonori poked my forehead. I couldn't feel any pain because I was a zombie, so naturally I didn't really care about getting poked, but I still rubbed the place where she had poked me.

It was probably her way of telling me to stop complaining. Yeah, yeah, I got it.

"So, show your stuff to me."

"Huh?"

"You're satisfied with whatever you made, right?"

"Yeah! Come with me, it's over here!"

Tomonori pulled me by the hand like an excited child. Geez, she didn't even wait for me to get up out of my seat...

I resignedly shook my head and let myself be led to the class next door, where another girl rushed over to us.

"Yuki-chaaan, where did you go?"

She had long brown hair and perfect makeup. She was Tomonori's classmate and a member of the basketball team, Mihara Kanami.

It seemed like Tomonori's class was putting on an artwork exhibit. Each occupied desk had a set of paints and spread-out drawing paper.

Tomonori had said that all of the students in her class were in a club of some kind, so they also had their club's school festival prep to keep them busy. That's why they, as a class, chose to just do an art exhibit.

“Tadaaa~~.” Tomonori pointed to a painting of the sun, the sea, and some sunflowers. You could say that painting was a direct representation of Tomonori herself.

“Looks like something a kid would do.”

“But doesn’t it suit Yuki-chan perfectly?”

Mihara stroked Tomonori’s head.

“Hehehh~~.” Tomonori chuckled and looked at Mihara, and then something seemed to spark in her eyes.

“Did you know, Aikawa?!”

Tomonori grabbed me firmly by the shoulders. What was this all of a sudden?

“Know what?”

“The name ‘Bruce Lee,’ you know?! It’s because foreigners made a mistake with the name ‘Aoi-san’!”

What the hell was up with that obviously false piece of trivia? Was she trying to say that it’s because Bruce Lee sounds like Blue Three, and the Japanese words for “blue” and “three” are “aoi” and “san”?

Tomonori gave me a triumphant look, obviously thinking that I didn’t know. And then she continued in rapid succession.

“And ‘freeze-dried tofu’ comes from how wives would ask, ‘What about tonight?’ to their husbands and serve them tofu!”²

² Freeze-dried tofu is “kouya doufu.” The phrase “how about tonight?” is “konya dou?” “Fu” can also be the word for husband.

“You’re an idiot, aren’t you?”

“Japanese is amazing, isn’t it?!”

Tomonori looked up at the ceiling, almost as if she was praying to God. Just what was Tomonori thanking God for all of a sudden? I glanced to the side, and saw that Mihara was desperately trying to hold in a laugh.

Was it her? Was she the one who was feeding Tomonori these strange lies?

“Ahahaha! I can’t take it anymore! Yuki-chan is so cute!”

“Tomonori. I’m sorry, but all that information is false.”

“Eh? But... Kanami told me...”

Tomonori turned to Mihara, her eyes sparkling like those of an innocent young boy.

“Yuki-chan is such a smart girl. She remembered eeeverything I told her~~.”
Mihara was completely making fun of Tomonori.

“And the phrase ‘mendokusai’ comes from because the ‘men’ and ‘dou’ moves from kendo stink, right?!³ That one’s totally true, right?! It’s true... Right?”

“I’d really like to believe that, but... Sorry. Anyways, the kanji are different.”⁴

Tomonori suddenly hung her head.

“Sorry, Yuki-chan. Ahh, you were so cute back there.”

³ Mendokusai means annoying, while “kusai” means “stinky.”

⁴ Indeed, the kanji for the “men” in “mendokusai” and the “men” as a kendo term are different. Similarly with the “dou.”

Mihara hugged Tomonori tight; it seemed she was still trying hard not to laugh.

“Geez, why did you have to go and tell her all those random things...”

“Yuki-chan asked me for something interesting to talk with Aikawa about.”

Well, I did talk a *lot* with Tomonori every day... She probably wanted more topics to talk about.

“Haha, Yuki-chan believes anything and everything. That’s so funny and cute.”

“Kanami, you idiot! Which middle you from?!”

Tomonori put both her hands in the air and protested. Which middle you from... She could have at least said the whole sentence and asked, “Which middle school are you from?”⁵ But Mihara seemed to like it when Tomonori acted that way, so she just kept on smiling.

“By the way, which painting did Mihara make?”

“You gonna look at mine too?”

Mihara never stopped smiling as she hugged herself. Her suggestive, wriggling motions were getting on my nerves, so I decided to ignore her, but...

“Wait! Please look! I’ll show you my everything~~!”

She firmly grabbed me by the arms... I really couldn’t keep up with her energy.

Mihara’s painting was... a city. It was a top-down view of the city, like the view you would expect from Sim City. And, of course, it was bustling.

⁵ The phrase “which middle school are you from?!” is actually an insult in Japanese. Not a super common one, but it exists.

Wally also seemed to be hiding in her city.⁶

“But it’s a pretty good painting.”

“I know, right?”

“Anderson’s is also amazing!”

She had been depressed up until now, but Tomonori suddenly perked back up.

A handsome guy in the corner of the room holding a brush and ink looked our way. “You called?” he seemed to be saying.

He was the tallest person in our year, and he had blue eyes and silky hair. His name was Shimomura, but because he was handsome and didn’t look Japanese at all, everyone called him Anderson. Anderson had a palette that was smeared with black ink.

Why was he using ink instead of paint...?

I walked over to Anderson-kun, wondering what he could have painted...

And I saw that he had drawn Maitreya.⁷ He was resting one of his cheeks in his hands, and he only crossed one of his legs...

But, seriously, why the hell did he draw a Maitreya in a half-lotus position?

“The title is ‘The Thinking Man’.”

“He certainly seems to be completely lost in thought! But isn’t there a more appropriate statue you could have chosen to draw with that title?!”

⁶ I believe this is a less popular version of “Where’s Waldo?”

⁷ A deity in the Buddhist religion.

“But it’s amazing, isn’t it?!”

“Well, certainly, the painting is really good.”

“Huh...?” Mihara seemed to have noticed something.

“Hm?” I didn’t know what she had noticed, so I repeated her question back at her.

“Where is that super noisy guy? You know, with the spiky hair.”

“...Orito, you mean? Now that you mention it, I still haven’t seen him today. He was making the costumes with Hiramatsu up until yesterday, though...”

“If you’re looking for Orito... He’s been staring at Kanami for a while now.”

Tomonori pointed towards the middle of the room... Why was Orito in Tomonori’s class right now?

“Huh?”

Mihara’s body trembled. It was pretty clear she was disgusted.

Now that I took a good look, I saw that Orito was standing in front of a canvas with a brush palette in hand. He had the intense look of a boy in cram school and was staring right at Mihara... Or, rather, at her breasts.

You... What in the world were you doing in here? And just when I thought our class felt more quiet than usual...

“Does he like her?”

Anderson-kun said that with a serious look on his face.

Tomonori's eyes glittered with the excitement of a young maiden.

"Orito does? He likes Kanami? Seriously?! That's amazing! Yeah! Those eyes are definitely the eyes of love."

No, those eyes weren't the eyes of love. They were the eyes of a pervert.

Tomonori seemed resolved to find out the truth, and leapt over to where Orito was.

Everyone else shuffled over after her.

"W-what do you guys want?"

Orito was flustered, so Tomonori asked him directly:

"Does Orito like Kanami?"

"Huhhhh?"

That was probably the biggest 'huh' that Orito has ever given.

"But, But, you've just been staring all this time at Kanami... Ehehehe."

Tomonori put a hand to her mouth and giggled.

"No, no, the only thing I was looking at were the boooooooooooooobs!!"

As I thought.

"Ew, gross." Mihara hid behind Tomonori.

"...Why Mihara's?"

Anderson-kun cocked his head to the side. It was a rude thing to say... But Mihara's breasts were indeed fairly average, and I didn't see how they were good enough to catch Master Orito's attention.

"Have you all not realized yet? Mihara isn't wearing a bra."

"Groooooooooosss~~~!!!"

Mihara let out a screech and took a long running jump from Tomonori's side, punching right into Orito's shoulder.

"Gueh... But when you have as much experience as I do, you can see a bra strap even through a camisole under a sailor uniform."

Well... I admit that was pretty amazing...

"No, no, this is a bra top! The camisole has cups that come with it, so it's the same as wearing a bra..."

Mihara pulled at her clothes and protested.

"Impossible! To think that humanity has already invented such things..."

Anderson-kun gulped. Why the hell did he look so shocked by this?

"This is a con! It's a complete con!"

"Everything can just go to hell, dammit."

Was I the only person who thought that even a bra top was plenty attractive...?

"But isn't it still true that you're not wearing a bra?"

Uwah! Tomonori betrayed her!

“There’s definitely a bra cup attached, and there’s even pads in there.”

“Wait, wait! That sounds exactly like a bra, doesn’t it?!”

Anderson-kun frowned. He seemed to be thinking, ‘As if this situation weren’t crazy enough...’

“That’s what I’ve been saying all along!”

“What the hell... I’m relieved... So she actually does have a bra on... and I thought we had a national crisis on our hands. But it was just me getting tricked... Geez, what a great life I’ve had!”

Stop it! Stop tarnishing the name of the good Dr. Hiriluk that I respect so much!⁸

“By the way, what did Orito draw?”

When Anderson-kun changed the subject, Orito stood up from his chair.

“Ahh, it’s not actually done yet though...”

Oh? What was it? We all moved to a place where we could get a good look at the painting.

Orito had drawn what looked like a lightly-dressed girl reaching up with both her hands to put something on a shelf. She had no face, but she had the soft body of what was definitely a female from the neck down to the thighs.

“This is Kanami, isn’t it?”

Tomonori whispered to Mihara.

⁸ A One Piece character. These were apparently his last words? Not too sure.

“This is seriously grossing me out though.”

“I see... If you don’t draw the face, you can accentuate the breasts and the figure, and thus emphasize the fetishistic qualities of-”

Anderson-kun began to give commentary!

“This is amazing!”

“Wait just a second! Why is everyone praising it?! It’s just gross. It’s just gross gross gross~~.”

“I have to agree with Mihara. Also, why exactly is Orito in this class joining in on their school festival display?”

“Isn’t it better to have more paintings?”

It might be better, but you’re not even in the damn class.

“The teacher told me that it doesn’t matter who draws the paintings.”

Anderson-kun recalled the teacher’s words. It seemed the principal’s policy of letting students freely explore their interests lived on even in this classroom.

“...And that reminds me. Aikawa, did you finish the sign?”

“Hm? Well...”

“W-wait, wait! Let’s forget about Aikawa for a second!”

Tomonori waved her hands back and forth.

“Hey you, Aikawa.”

I heard a deep voice that obviously didn't belong to a high schooler call me from behind, so I turned around to see who it was. And I saw our homeroom teacher, known as "Shapeless," was standing there with a scowl.

I knew all too well what he wanted to say.

"You haven't gotten anything done, so what are you doing? Come now, you all should stop talking and get back to work too."

Yes, ever since the second semester began, I had gotten no work done. And there were a few reasons why I hadn't gotten any work done.

Among those reasons, the biggest one was...

"Ayumu!"

Oh look, here we go again. Each and every time, this chestnut-haired girl Haruna would come barging in with a chainsaw, her ahoge bouncing back and forth joyfully...

"I found a Megalo!"

And then she would spout some cryptic message like that and pull me by the hand.

Haruna came from the magical world Virie, and she had come to this world in order to exterminate monsters called Megalo.

Megalo were the natural enemies of the masou shoujo, and they came from the Underworld, where the souls of the dead gathered, to kill the masou shoujo in this world. I wanted to tell them to go to Virie instead, but it was pointless; for some reason those two groups decided to fight each other day and night in the world I happened to live in.

That might have been a lot of boring exposition, but in short:

The Megalo came to this world to kill the masou shoujo.

And the masou shoujo wanted to exterminate the Megalo.

That's the kind of relationship they had with each other.

There was also Yuu, the Necromancer from the Underworld who was freeloading off me at my house.

On one hand, I'm glad that we managed to resolve the situation where Yuu decided to run away from home. But on the other hand, that meant that our Megalo exterminating sessions began again.

Haruna pulled me by the hand and we exited the classroom. Honestly, exterminating Megalo was annoying and I didn't like doing it, but it's not like I could just tell Haruna to go by herself.

Originally, Haruna was able to transform into a strange masou shoujo outfit and beat Megalo with the power of magic, but Yuu had sucked out all her magical energy and so she could no longer do that. And Megalo were not easy creatures to beat, even for a zombie. So there was no way a stupid idiot who couldn't even transform could fight them and defeat them.

(Originally, Haruna was able to transform into a masou shoujo with a strange outfit and beat Megalo with the power of magic, but Yuu had sucked out all her magical energy, so she could no longer do that. And Megalo were not easy creatures to beat, even for a zombie, so there was no way a stupid idiot who couldn't even transform could fight them and win.)

But despite all that, even if she knew she might be killed, even if she knew she was no match for them, that girl continued to challenge the Megalo.

In the end, the task of defeating the Megalo fell to poor zombie me.

When we got out of the school building, I took a look up at the sky. The autumn sky was dyed orange, and the sun was just about to disappear over the horizon.

Now, if it really did disappear over the horizon, then I would be able to head towards it with a skip in my step, but even that small sliver of sunlight made my body feel sluggish.

I was close to collapsing, but because Haruna pulled me forward so energetically, I managed to stay on my feet and advance.

Haruna's ahoge wagged back and forth like a dog's tail. She headed for the area around the station, pulling my hand the entire way.

And that's why I ran along that busy National highway with a young girl who held a chainsaw.

Haruna stopped when we were just about at the station.

"He should be somewhere around here!"

Her ahoge bent at a right angle, almost as if she was dowsing... What a convenient little thing.⁹

"You know, I've always wanted to ask, but... How exactly are you finding the Megalo? It always seems pretty random..."

"I can't really use magic to detect them right now, but I can sense when the Megalo are looking for masou shoujo."

⁹ Dowsing is a rather archaic form of divination used to locate water or buried gems, where someone uses a bent stick.

“So it’s like... reverse tracing?”

“Yeah, like that! Well, it’s not as great as people who can just use magic to detect them, but... It’s better to find high-class Megalo who want to fight than to just look for the small-fry, am I right?!”

I see. Certainly, if it’s a Megalo who’s actively looking for masou shoujo to fight, then those Megalo have to be pretty strong. So that’s why every Megalo we have to exterminate is some stupidly strong Class AA thing. Geez, give me a break...

“So, does that mean... the normal masou shoujo are finding weaker Megalo to fight...?”

“Yeah. Normal students only hunt C or B rank Megalo! But...”

“But?”

“But I’m a genius!”

Ah, I see. This girl’s insane pride is really a bother sometimes...

“It’s that one over there! Let’s go beat it, Ayumu!”

She pointed the chainsaw at a gyudon¹⁰ shop. A banner flapped in the wind outside the shop entrance, announcing that the shop was having a special sale. Haruna was pointing past that banner...

Huh? The Megalo was inside the shop?

I crouched a bit and looked beyond the glass door... And I saw that the Megalo was indeed in there.

Today’s Megalo was a raccoon Megalo, a huge raccoon in a boy’s school uniform.

¹⁰ Beef rice bowl. Pretty much the cheapest restaurants you can go to in Japan.

He was a complete size larger than Haruna, and he gazed at us with his cute eyes from behind the glass door.

When he saw me and Haruna, he seemed to have gotten pretty pumped up for a fight and began to hurry out of the shop.

Could it be that he was in the middle of eating? Well, I guess that if a huge raccoon in a school uniform like that came into a shop, the shop employees would think it was some kind of dare or TV program or something...

The raccoon seemed to be in a hurry, but he just stood behind the shop door and looked around restlessly.

He didn't seem to realize that the shop door was an automatic door, the kind that opened when you touched it in the right spot. He took a step back and looked up, obviously bewildered.

"It doesn't open..."

His small fingers pawed at the door and he let out a sad-sounding groan.

...Well, ain't that cute.

"That one..." Haruna watched the raccoon with a look in her eyes as if she was looking at something dirty. "He's planning on eating me."

I wanted to mention that it really didn't look like the raccoon had any idea of the kind, but Haruna continued before I could interject.

"You know, character-wise."

...What the hell did "character-wise" mean?

The raccoon got a shop employee to open the door for him, and finally managed to escape from the shop. He probably got the shop employee to help when he was going in too... Geez, that's damn cute.

"In any case, we have to get somewhere without so many people. We're going to cause trouble if we stay here in front of the station."

There were way too many people around. The people around there probably thought the raccoon was some kind of stunt, but if we started fighting then they might start to panic.

"Huh? Once we find him we have to kill him! It's search and destronn!"

Why the hell was she acting like some evil villain out of Transformers or Kamen Rider V3? And did she mean search and destroy?

"Come on, if I keep standing out in the sun I'm going to collapse. Let's at least go somewhere with shadows, somewhere I can fight."

"Geez... Ayumu is such a wimp. All right, fine, I guess we gotta do what we gotta do!"

Why, thank you very much. That overly-energetic Haruna once again grabbed me by the hands, and I was hurriedly dragged away.

"Hah!" As Haruna ran ahead of me, her mouth narrowed into a triangle and she showed me a smile.

"Looks like there's another one!"

She really sounded like she was enjoying herself.

Geez, give me a break... It seemed that today was shaping up to be a bad day.

"Wait... Huh? Haruna, are you sure you're all right?"

When Haruna felt the strong magical energy of the Megalo, she should have lost the strength from her body and fallen to the floor. That was the case up until yesterday.

But right now, Haruna seemed to be in her usual mischievous mood, and just gave me a full-fledged smile as her ahoge bounced back and forth happily.

Chapter 1: Part 2

When we had gone a bit past the line of restaurants in front of the station, we arrived at a relatively deserted residential district. Haruna turned around.

Behind us was the raccoon; he had finally caught up to us, and his shoulders were heaving up and down in exhaustion.

“...it’s not whatcha think...”

What wasn’t? The raccoon waved his hand back and forth and continued.

“I knew how dat thing opened, kay?”

“Huh?” Haruna responded to his question with a question of her own.

“That door and me just don’t get along. Seriously.”

Was he embarrassed about not being able to get that door open? Damn, his excuses were cute! What the hell was this raccoon?! If he wasn’t a raccoon then this would be seriously annoying, but damn was he cute!

When we finally got somewhere without many people, we turned around to face the raccoon like some Wild West gun showdown.

“That’s the A-Class Megalo, Araichuu!”¹

“Sounds like one of the original Drifters.”¹

So he was A-class... That meant we could still get completely done in if we weren’t careful.

¹ The Drifters were a Japanese band and comedic group. Arai Chuu (Chuu being his first name) was one of the original group members. However, the kanji that Haruna uses for the name of the Megalo actually translate to something like “In the middle of being washed.” So there is an untranslatable pun going on.

There was a time in the past when I didn't take a horse Megalo seriously enough and got beaten, so... I should try to be careful here.

The raccoon was far away from us, so no matter what attack he used, I was pretty confident I could react quickly enough... But then--

The raccoon took out a handgun.

What the hell?! He had a gun?!

But if he had a gun, then why hadn't he used it until now...? He could have used it while he was chasing us.

I suddenly found the barrel of a .45-caliber Smith & Wesson Schofield pointed right at me.

The raccoon went for the trigger with his cute little fingers, when...

"Oooo, can't reach the triggerrrrr~~..."

I see, I see! The raccoon couldn't reach the trigger with his fingers!

And when the raccoon tried really hard to somehow fire the gun... The gun dropped to the ground. "Ahh..." The raccoon sounded pretty sad as he picked the gun back up...

"Sorry... Can come back after I go wash this?"

S-so damn cute! I wanted to see him wash that!!

...crap! That would have been a good chance to beat him!

"Ayumu, what are you doing? Hurry up and beat him!"

“Ugh, gimme a sec... I’m taking psychological damage here...”

“Ayumu is seriously useless... You probably haven’t even noticed the guy above us.”

“Above?” I looked up... and saw a gorilla there.

Compared to the raccoon, he was not cute at all. He had a red ribbon tied to his head but he was also wearing a boy’s school uniform, so it was initially hard to tell what his gender was.

But, anyway, a gorilla with the bulging muscles of a bodybuilder was clinging to the top of the telephone pole next to me. H-he seriously wasn’t cute at all...

But I didn’t have time to just stand there and analyze the situation. The gorilla came at me like a pro wrestler jumping off the top rope to slam his opponent.

I began to leap to the side, but Haruna didn’t budge an inch.

She didn’t even ready her chainsaw; she just stared up at the gorilla with a slight smile.

She lifted her hands up, almost as if welcoming the gorilla... What an idiot! I quickly rushed over and held her small body to mine.

My back was suddenly torn apart--the gorilla’s fat fingers had pierced right into my back. As a zombie, I felt no pain, but it still wasn’t the best feeling.

As expected from a Megalo... What amazing power. I held Haruna’s childlike body close and rolled along the asphalt.

“Hey, dammit! Right now, you definitely, *definitely* touched my breasts, didn’t you?! You damn pervert! Geroqe Eromero!”

Was I a horror movie master or something?! Instead of Eromero, don't you mean director George A. Romero?!

"Well, sorry! It's not like I felt much, but I'm sorry!"

"You're picking a fight with me, aren't you?! Fondling someone's soft and fluffy chest like that... Don't screw with me!!"

"That's why I'm apologizing... I'm sorry! ...geez, what the hell are you thinking?! Hurry up and run!"

"You telling me to run from small fry like that?!"

Ahh, so that's what she was thinking...

"Well, fine; just wait over there, then."

It might be because Tokyo's buildings were just insanely high, but I suddenly found myself in the shade, and felt like I could actually fight. I let go of Haruna and turned towards the ribbon-wearing gorilla--

Kyah... Well, there go my ribs.

As I was turning around, the Gorilla had swung his huge arms around like a lariat. They dug into my side.

My feet lifted off the ground. Ah, this was bad... This gorilla was seriously strong.

I crashed into the wall of some house, but I immediately countered with a kick. I wanted to try a jump kick this time, but my full-force kick was blocked by some invisible barrier.

Something, kind of like a purple pane of glass appeared to protect the gorilla. Was it like Haruna's barriers? Could Megalo use those too?

Ah... This wasn't working; I couldn't beat this guy just as a zombie. So I had to transform, I guess.

I tried to launch a kick one more time but was repelled again, so I returned to Haruna.

If I wanted to transform into a masou shoujo, then I needed the chainsaw that she had.

"Haruna, give me the chainsaw."

"It's got a name! Call it Mystletainn!"

Haruna, I really want to humor you here, but I'm not a big enough idiot to do something like that in the middle of a fight...

"Ah, you don't have to say anything--it's already really obvious that you want to put a 'super' in front of the name too."

"Fine, fine, just hand it over." I reached out, but...

"Ahh, ha ha ha ha..." Haruna gave me a strained smile and denied me.

"Come on now. Give it to me, come on..." I stood firm, but...

"Ahh, ha ha ha ha..."

Why wasn't she giving it to me...? Was she telling me to stay untransformed and get beaten to pieces? What kind of grudge did she have against me?

"By the way, Ayumu... They're teaming up right now."

"Teaming up?"

“That barrier was made by that guy.”

Haruna pointed at the raccoon.

“So... Are you saying that I can’t beat the gorilla if I don’t beat him first?”

“Isn’t that obvious?! Well, but if it were me, then I guess it'd be a bit different!”

“So anyways, I guess I’ll deal with that raccoon...”

I just... had to beat him...

At some point, I had become lost for words.

Why, you ask? Because that damn raccoon had dropped his gun while wiping it off with a handkerchief! He looked really sad now!

“As if I could kill something that cute!!”

As I yelled, the gorilla came at me once again, aiming a punch at my face.

I lowered my head and dodged, then sent a punch right into his body... However, as expected, the barrier blocked me.

What should I do?! What should I do here?!

The gorilla’s body blurred. I rubbed my eyes, trying to make sense of what I was seeing, and when I took another look at the gorilla... The gorilla had become four gorillas.

Gyahhhhhhhhhhhhh!!! I wanted more raccoons!!!

Why were there more gorillas?! Who the hell profited from that!? Make them raccoons! If something has to multiply, then make it a raccoon!!

“So either one of them is the real one, or this is the Four-Body Fist technique...”²”

“They’re all real! Isn’t that obvious?! Sometimes Ayumu is just completely hopeless...”

I caught Haruna by the hand as she tried to take a step forward.

“Are you an idiot?! Let’s run! This isn’t going to work! We can’t beat that raccoon!”

“Huh? But it’s impossible for us to run away now!”

I really wanted you to tell me why we couldn’t...

As Haruna whined, I picked her up and ran away with all my strength.

But there was one miscalculation on my part... and that was that the gorilla’s speed had gone way up. What the hell?! Shouldn’t they have been weaker now that they’d split into four?!

One of them tackled me with his head, almost like a headbutt. Another dropkicked me with his short legs, while the others sent attacks at me that would put pro wrestlers to shame.

As I tried to prevent Haruna from getting hit, I occasionally let go of her and got a bit away from her, using myself as a cushion... In general, I was pretty busy.

After getting tossed around like a volleyball and torn to shreds by these gorillas, I finally collapsed.

Those damn gorillas... Even if they waited for me to recover...

² A reference to a skill in the Dragonball series.

I tried to get up off the ground, but one of the gorillas suddenly came at me with a super heavy body press as I was laying there.

I had the feeling that if I got hit by that, then my bones would reform in weird ways.

I somehow got up and dodged the attack, then sent a strong roundhouse kick at the gorilla with 432% of a human's strength. With that much force, I should be able to break straight through that barrier...

...that's what I thought, but I was wrong.

I could feel the bones in my leg shatter into tiny splinters from the impact of kicking that barrier.

That would definitely take a bit of time to heal... and there wasn't anything I could do about it.

I was already dead, so I'd be fine no matter how much I got beaten up. Haruna, on the other hand...

"Hurry up and get away! Just run away by yourself!"

"I'm saying that there's no point in running away here!"

She laughed scornfully at me. She had witnessed me getting beaten to a pulp, and yet she still wanted to fight those Megalo?

I pulled Haruna back as she tried to head for the gorilla.

"Wait, dammit! I'm begging you, just listen to me and run away!"

"Ayumu, you were beaten that badly so easily... Aren't you angry at all?"

“Ahh, unfortunately, I’m used to dying. As long as you’re safe... I’m fine with dying.”

Ugh, not good... The lower half of my body had died. I felt myself collapsing to the ground.

As I looked up at the sky, I saw that it was still early in the evening. If it could just get to nighttime...

If it was nighttime... then I could get up pretty quickly... god dammit.

“Anyways, Ayumu, you just roll around over there for now!”

That idiot... I really wanted to punch her down. Just cut it out and realize how dangerous this situation is...

I tried to get up again, but it seemed like there was some weird fracture in my ankle, so I couldn’t really manage to.

Rather, I wanted to congratulate my leg for being able to make it so far like that.

“Nomobuyo, woshi, hashitawa, dokeda, gunmiicha, dei, ribura!”

Those words were a spell... A spell that I personally was more familiar with than “bippidy boppidy boo,” “tekumaku mayakon,” or “expecto patronum.” It was the chant to transform into a masou shoujo.

It was a chant that I was always forced to say in Haruna’s place.

The clothes Haruna was wearing flew off, and after a moment without them, a cute pink cosplay outfit appeared. As expected, this type of transformation was best done by girls... When I thought about myself transforming like that, it was hard to stop laughing.

“Feast your eyes on this!”

The chainsaw she was holding made a shrill grinding noise as it kicked into gear and gave off a ruby glow.

Why...

“Haruna, why...”

“Why can I transform, you ask?”

“Why did you call me out here?! If you can transform again, then go by yourself, dammit!”

“Ehh... Y-you should be happy! What is wrong with you?!”

So that was why she hadn't given me the chainsaw, and that was why she seemed so happy: her magical energy had returned.

That was why she had called me all the way out there and had just stood aside, watching... How could that make me happy?

“At any rate, you just wanted to show me how much of a genius you are, right?”

Haruna seemed to have fallen into a bad mood, so I figured it would be pointless to keep arguing with her. Before she could argue back, I continued.

“Then show me. Show me how much of a genius you are.”

Haruna gave me the cute smile of a young girl, and then...

“Oh healing wind, go forth and heal! Earth Glaive!”

She chanted something like that and pointed her chainsaw at the gorilla. When

she did, the chainsaw with a ruby glow emitted a fireball larger than a basketball and sent it crashing into one of the gorillas. In the next moment, that gorilla had burnt to ash.

As I watched the gorilla turn to white particles, I desperately moved my immobile legs, inhaled deeply through my nose, and then on the next exhale, with all my might...

“Where the hell did fire come into that?!”

I just had to say it. I couldn’t just keep that bottled up forever.

Because, seriously, wasn’t that weird?! She said healing, and wind, and earth... What the hell?!

I mean... Wait, huh? What happened to that barrier?

“Listen up, Ayumu! Barriers have their limits. So if they’re being protected by a barrier, you just need to attack with more force than the barrier can stop. That’s all!”

What the hell... Are you saying that Haruna’s spell was stronger than my zombie strength?

Just by becoming a masou shoujo, Haruna was stronger than me... For some reason, that made me feel a bit lonely. Next, a gorilla came right at us, but...

“Fly forth... Blades of light!”

She completely ripped that off! She completely ripped that off without even emailing that venerable author and asking for permission!³

³ She ripped off an attack from Sorcerous Stabber Orphen, another light novel series.

A fireball erupted from the chainsaw and attacked the gorilla.

I saw the gorilla manage to dodge the attack, and then suddenly Haruna's small body vanished. At the same time, I saw a flash of her skirt as she sent her feet crashing into the raccoon with a flying kick.

I couldn't even see that sequence of events... No, these eyes which had trained with that strongest warrior Dai-sensei, which had witnessed the attacks of that ridiculously strong King of the Night, which were living with that swift, ponytailed vampire ninja, and which spoke each day with that track star... Even they couldn't hope to follow that attack.

All I saw was a sweet girl silently drifting down to the ground like dandelion fluff, and from that, I just guessed that she had probably hit the raccoon with a flying kick.

What did she do...? I had no idea. Haruna had beaten the raccoon, and I had no idea how.

“Waaaaah~~! How Could I Loooooosse~~~?!”

This raccoon...!! He didn't even seem able to believe he had lost as he turned to white particles. Ugh, I had wanted to keep him as a pet...

“They think defense is important. In other words, that is just proof that their defense is weak!”

As Haruna said that with a proud look on her face, she slammed into one of the gorillas with her chainsaw. And, just like the me of a few minutes ago, the gorilla was sent sliding back on the asphalt.

“If there is evil in this world... it lurks in the hearts of men! Indignation!”⁴

Haruna-san, that’s not a chant! That’s just an old saying!

One of the gorillas tried to grab Haruna. For a small girl like that, such a sight should have been terrifying.

However... The gorilla’s body was enveloped by flames. And indeed, in the next moment he had been burnt to ash.

The gorilla also no longer seemed to know what was going on. He was being overwhelmed by a girl one... no, three sizes smaller. He took a step back.

“Darker than dusk, more crimson than a stream of blood, I stand here today in thine venerable name, buried in the flow of time, pledging an oath to darkness, and for all those foolish beings standing in our way, we combine our powers and destroy them!”⁵

She screwed it up! She was so close too! She was so damn close!

“Hiyahhh~!!”

A fireball appeared from the chainsaw.

I guess I’m glad there wasn’t a chant there.

The last gorilla turned into white particles, and Haruna came back to me with a happy expression on her face.

“How was that?! Amazing, right?!”

⁴ This is the opening line of Tales of Phantasia, and Indignation is one of the signature spells of the Tales game series. (Indignation has an actual chant. That is not it.)

⁵ An over-the-top chant from Slayers.

She was grinning from ear to ear.

I was seriously trembling. There was no point in me trying to protect her.

Now that Haruna had recovered her masou shoujo powers... Compared to a zombie like me...

She was overwhelmingly stronger.

Honestly, I couldn't help but laugh. I had been treating this saucy little girl like a kid all this time... and then it turned out that I didn't need to protect her at all. I felt like a mother bird watching her young leave the nest... I felt lonely, and yet also happy.

Haruna took an arrogant pose as she looked down at me.

"But Ayumu tried hard up until now, so I'll at least praise you for that!"

She patted my head a few times.

"Geez... I really was acting like a huge clown back there..."

She probably agreed. "Nyahaha!" She laughed with her arms crossed.

"Well, when a genius like me begins to use attack magic, even A-class Megalo are no sweat!"

"How long have you had your powers back?"

"Starting today, of course! I suddenly figured everything out!"

After saying that and dispelling her transformation, Haruna reached inside her shirt and showed me a pendant that had been hanging from her neck.

“What’s that?”

“Look at this! I used some random stuff I found at Ayumu’s school and invented a magical energy suction device! I just have to wear this thing around my neck and all the magical energy around me gets sucked into it!”

So that was how Haruna got back the magical energy that Yuu had taken from her? It seemed like this girl really was a genius.

“You made that all by yourself?”

“Nyah. There are some people in this world who know about the magical arts, so I got a bit of help.”

Wait, there were people like Dai-sensei in this world?

Who was it? Who was the weirdo who actually could help someone like Haruna out? If they used stuff from our school... Then could this be someone who was at school?

“Well, anyways, I’m happy for you.”

“Yeah! I’m really strong right now! I’m a million times stronger than I was before I met such an idiot like you!”

“A million times stronger...”

“Listen up, Ayumu! A-class Megalo are supposed to be so tough that it’s hard for masou shoujo to defeat them! And with just one attack, with as much magical energy as Dai-sensei had... Yeah. I’m the only person in the world who could have beaten that Megalo with just a single fireball! In other words...”

“In other words?”

“Right now, I’ve become the strongest! I’m not just talking about AAA-class Megalo, which you need lots of masou shoujo to defeat! I feel like I can even beat S-class Megalo alone! Those are the Megalo that don’t go down no matter how many masou shoujo are there, ya know!”

Seeing Haruna declare that so proudly, I felt that eventually Haruna would:

-

(1) Get too cocky and get done in by a Megalo,

(2) Break her magical energy suction device or whatever,

(3) Would stop finding Megalo to fight with,

or (4) Would break her masou weapon.

-

Yeah, I got the feeling that one of those four things would happen, and then she would get pretty depressed. When you declare to the world that you're the strongest, there's no way that some ill fate isn't waiting for you at the end of it all.

But at the same time, I could feel myself growing a bit curious as to what would happen to Haruna after this.

Oh... Actually, before that, I really should get back to school and finish that sign.

Chapter 1: Part 3

So, I mean, having all my time taken up by fighting Megalo meant that my preparations for the school festival hadn't gone anywhere at all... But the school festival was coming in two days, so I was getting a bit panicked.

Once I told Haruna that I was heading back to school, she responded with, "Ah, I've got something to do, too!" Her ahoge boinged into the shape of an exclamation mark and she disappeared off to somewhere.

Seriously, I never know what that girl is thinking...

I turned completely around and headed back to school. I stopped by a convenience store to buy some tea and bread in preparation for what promised to be a long night, and then I finally arrived at the completely dark school building.

...hm? There was still a single light on, and it was in my classroom...

Was somebody still there, doing something...? Well, maybe I should go and share a bit of my food, then... I broke into a small sprint as I headed for my classroom.

I put my hand on the doorknob, but then a single worry gripped me:

What if I opened the door and a guy and a girl were making out in there?

I knocked loudly a few times, and after waiting a bit, I softly opened the door.

I could see the darkness of night outside the window. The classroom was so absolutely silent that even the smallest sound could be heard.

And in that classroom were... my homeroom teacher and the pretty girl with the pigtails, Hiramatsu.

They didn't look like a couple at all... Geez, I was worried for nothing.

"Aikawa... kun."

"It's just... you two?"

"Hiramatsu is helping out with the task that you completely neglected."

There was strong blame hidden in those words.

I see... So Hiramatsu was there to make the sign I had left unfinished... even though everyone else had left.

As expected from an honors student... She was just overflowing with kindness.

"Sorry... Something came up and I had to leave. I'll finish the rest by myself."

"Eh?Ah..... I see....."

For some reason, Hiramatsu seemed a bit lonely. The other random guy in the room sighed.

"Are you an idiot, Aikawa? We're not at a point where you can finish this by yourself."

...indeed, he was quite right.

"Aikawa-kun... Umm... I... Sorry. Please... let me help."

That's... Ugh, I didn't want to, but when a meek girl like that looks up at me with eyes like hers and asks me to let her help...

"I got it. Please help me, Hiramatsu."

“O-okay! ...thank you, Aikawa-kun.”

“Haha, why is the person helping out thanking me? Thanks to you too, Hiramatsu.”

“Well, maybe sensei will go to the staff room and drink a bit, then...”

That damn teacher...

“Please help us finish.”

I glared at him and quickly said that. Be a bit more considerate of your students, dammit...

“Ugh, fine...”

And so the kind honors student, the brusque old man, and I began to make the sign at a quick pace.

But then...

“Take a look, take a look!”

Once again, that genius bishoujo demon baroness masou shoujo had come.

She was carrying some huge thing covered with sheets.

When she got to us, she put that strange thing in the middle of the classroom, in front of the lockers.

“What the hell is that huge thing...?”

I sighed and tore off the sheet.

And what I saw there was... myself. Or, rather, it was a mannequin that looked exactly like me. His left hand was on his waist, his right hand was raised, and his lovable eyes were looking somewhere up and to the right.

...what the hell was that? Some kind of joke?

“I finally finished it! Isn’t this amazing?!”

She puffed out her sadly-flat chest, which bore no fruit at all, and gave us a proud “tadaa~” while violently striking the mannequin (me). The mannequin fell like a daruma¹ but then got right back up like some kind of punching bag.

By the way, why was the mannequin in the same pose I had seen in that old comedy sketch by the Tunnels...?

Give me a break... My body might be rotten, but even zombies have some base level of shame.

“That’s... pretty amazing...”

Hiramatsu sounded impressed.

“How great for you...”

My homeroom teacher yawned and praised Haruna.

“If we’re doing a monster café, then you’ve gotta have something gross like this!”

Wait, was she planning on leaving that there until the school festival?!

Give me a damn break... I wasn’t coming to school if she did that.

¹ Something like [this](#).

“No. Haruna, you can’t put this thing here, so take it and go home... Actually, even leaving it back at our house is bad! Just throw it right into the incinerator!”

“Ehh? But I worked really hard on this, ya know!”

“Aikawa-kun... I think... it’s pretty cool.”

“Hiramatsu... Ugh, crap! I almost got swept away there! Anyways, just get rid of it. Get it?”

“Ugh, not really!”

That damn idiot... I tried to make Haruna get rid of the mannequin she'd just brought, but she started grumbling about how it was too heavy, so our homeroom teacher went with her. In the end, neither of them came back.

I could see Haruna getting sulky and going home, but that damn useless teacher... Did he run away?

Hiramatsu didn’t seem to mind at all; she just continued working in silence.

If you asked me, what set apart an honors student from the rest was just how well they could focus.

And boy could she focus... I couldn’t help but feel a lot of respect for her as I watched her squat on top of those newspapers spread out over the floor and continue to work.

“Well, I can’t just stand here and let her win...”

I watched her pigtailed sway to and fro while I took the same position over the newspapers and began to put my hands to work.

It only took a few minutes for a sense of tiredness to start to seep into my hips. I really wanted to just roll down onto the floor and fall asleep.

“Aha... Aikawa-kun... you don’t... have to push yourself.”

“All right, I’ll take a nap then.”

“Fufu... That’s fine... Hey, Aikawa-kun... We’re in the school at night... Is your heart also beating a bit faster?”

“Yeah, it’s like seeing a familiar place in a completely different light...”

“Ahh... I just remembered. Do you know? This school building... before... it used to be a gravesite.”

“Oh? I didn’t know that at all. Actually, I do remember that there’s a graveyard nearby...”

There was a graveyard between my house and the school that often served as a local hangout for zombies. For an undead like me, it was nice to go to a graveyard and cool off.

“And they say... that this school is haunted.”

“Well, I guess that there would be a few monsters around... like, vampires and zombies and stuff.”

“Geez, Aikawa-kun... You don’t believe in ghosts?”

“I do believe in them... Actually, I’m already dead myself.”

“Ahaha... Aikawa-kun... you’re a funny guy.”

“Does Hiramatsu believe in ghosts?”

“Hmm... I don’t want to believe in them... You know what they say... Only people who believe can see them, right? Although, I guess even if you believed in the gods, you aren’t able to see them... so...”

“By the way, what kinds of ghosts did you hear come out around here?”

“Eh? ... A little girl... wearing white clothes... or something like that? She appears... at night in the science classroom... in a puff of smoke...”

“Hmm, well we’re here and it’s night, so... It’d be nice if we could meet her.”

“Ooo... Aikawa-kun... You’re such a meanie...”

As we spoke of rumors like that, we proceeded with our work.

By the time the clock struck nine, we had finished a decent chunk of our work.

In the end, that damn good-for-nothing teacher hadn’t come back even once...

“Should we head home?”

“Yes... Sure... Should we continue... tomorrow?”

We finished cleaning up and picked up our schoolbags.

“Ah... We have to go tell Kurisu-sensei... that we’re going home.”

“Does it matter? I always just go home whenever I want.”

“But... We really should tell him.”

She was an honors student through and through.

We headed for the staff room to find our homeroom teacher, but we couldn't see him.

Geez... He left his students here and just went off somewhere...

"M-maybe... this is the work of a ghost...?"

Hiramatsu gripped my blazer tight.

"Ah, well, then Hiramatsu can go back first... I'll find sensei and tell him."

"Aikawa-kun..."

"Or we can go find the ghost together?"

"...ugh! ...Aikawa-kun!"

Hiramatsu pouted and gave me an angry look. She seemed to be saying, "Don't tease me!" I escorted her all the way to the shoeboxes, watching her as she went out the school gate while waving at me. And then I turned back.

She said the science classroom, right? I believed in the existence of ghosts; there were definitely things like that in this world. And if that ghost was doing something suspicious night after night...

I headed right for the same science classroom where the rumors had originated.

The school was silent at night, and I could only hear the sound of my footsteps echoing through the hallway.

This atmosphere alone was enough to convince me that a ghost might appear.

Oh...? I stopped right in front of the science classroom. I looked through the glass part of the door and saw what looked like smoke rising to the ceiling. Seriously...? There really was a ghost here?

I put my hand on the doorknob and confirmed that it wasn't locked.

I could feel alarm bells go off in my head as my heart began to beat fast. I was something like a ghost myself, so there was no reason for me to be afraid here, but... For some reason, I couldn't help it in this kind of atmosphere.

Krchhh... I opened the door and went inside, tensing my body to prepare for any attack that might be thrown in my direction. I looked around... The lights were off, so the room was pretty dark, but there was a single source of light. I could see the blue flame of an alcohol lamp, with a small netting placed on top of it...

And sitting right next to it was a girl wearing a white Gothic Lolita outfit.

"What the hell are you doing?!"

Was she doing some shady experiment or something? I quickly ran over in order to stop her.

It might have been because she suddenly was spoken to, but that girl ghost suddenly jumped in fright.

"Fueh? Ahhhhhhhh!!!!!"

And then the alcohol lamp and the netting above it both fell to the floor... Geez, you're a pretty bad ghost if you get scared like that.



The alcohol lamp's flame went out when it fell to the floor, plunging the classroom into total darkness.

I relied on my memory from before the flame went out and went over to where the girl was, at which point I realized that she was quite a cute girl. She looked to be... a bit older than ten? She had such nice features that it really was a shame that she was made to play a ghost... Well, it's not like I've ever heard of a story featuring an unattractive ghost, so if you get rid of the bias of the 'scary ghost,' then I guess all ghosts are pretty.

There was what looked to be a big bottle on the table. As I thought, she was doing some shady experiment, wasn't she?

I began to ask her what she was doing, but the girl put a finger to her pursed lips. "Shhh!" And then...

"This! Take this! Don't tell anybody about this!"

She pushed a few paper bills into my hand. It seemed... that she wasn't the bad kind of ghost.

And then she picked up the big bottle on the table.

"Hey..."

Gulp gulp gulp. She completely ignored my complaints, drinking right out of the bottle and then speeding right out of the classroom. I just stood there, dumbfounded, and could only watch that entire scene unfold.

...wait, was I supposed to be the one who cleaned all this mess up? Geez...

I picked up the alcohol lamp and the hot netting that was still being scorched by the flame. As I did, I saw that there was something else scattered on the floor.

What in the world could that ghost have been doing...? I timidly picked it up and squinted my eyes in the darkness.

“Why the hell was she grilling squid?!”

Yes, it was squid. She was using this science room to grill and eat squid... What a weird ghost.

“They were doin’ that on Furuhata Ninzaburou!² Looked delicious!”

Why was she watching TV serials like Furuhata...? Well, I guess life as a zombie wasn’t like how they made it out to be, so maybe life as a ghost was also surprisingly normal.

Wait, was she still here?! I turned around, but the girl had already vanished. It seemed that she had quickly run away.

And when I opened my hands... I realized that I wasn’t holding onto money. They were coupons for some bar. Was she an old man?! The grilled squid... and then this... Was she some old man?!

“Dontcha tell anybody I was here grilling squid! It’s a secret, ‘kay?!”

Dammit, if you’re going to disappear, then just disappear already!

Oh, right... I guess I have to make a note here: after this, the squid was shared with the staff and they thoroughly enjoyed it³.

² Japanese police drama.

³ On Japanese TV, this line would often be said when there is a large amount of food on screen, as a way to reassure the viewers that no food was wasted. They take food waste seriously over there.

Chapter 1: Part 4

Friday, October Sixth. The school festival was one day away.

My home was a place that provided me with peace of mind, and for a zombie like me, my room in particular was a paradise in which I could just lazily pass the time.

However, I had no time to relax; I spent the whole day finishing that sign.

It was soon ten in the evening, and the sun had completely set. Honors students like Hiramatsu were probably already asleep, but a zombie like me didn't feel like sleeping at all. I usually stayed up until five in the morning and then would sleep at school. At night, I would usually be free to stay up and watch late-night TV with Yuu, or I'd go out to hunt Megalo.

So, really, I welcomed an honest task like this.

Hiramatsu had helped out with the sign again after school, but we couldn't finish and I ended up bringing it home with me to finish up.

Ugh... I really wanted to punch the guy who had the brilliant idea to make this sign so complicated...

But it looked like I would make it in time. I really had to treat Hiramatsu to something the next time I saw her... I gave a yawn and stretched.

I needed a distraction, so I headed for the living room.

I got to the first floor hallway and happened to bump into Sera, who was wearing a casual outfit composed of a knitted turtleneck, shorts, and tights.

The long, beautiful hairs in her ponytail were colored raven black. You could call her face cute or beautiful, and her hands were pale and slender.

There was no way such a beautiful being could be human... And in this case, that expression actually wasn't too far off. She was a vampire ninja, actually closer to a vampire... Well, or you could say she was closer to a demon.

Her full breasts were resting on top of her crossed arms. Sera clicked her tongue.

"I was just about to go upstairs to get you."

"So why did you have to click your tongue?"

"I was just thinking about how I wasted my time for your sake... So it naturally came out."

Sera turned on her heel and went back into the living room. I followed her.

Oh...? All three of the girls were here. That was quite rare for this time of the night.

"What are all three of you doing here?"

Making a late-night snack. = *"Ehehe~. Tonight Yuu tried cooking~~!!"*

Seriously? Why didn't you tell me earlier?!

Yuu just continued looking towards the TV, her silver hair fluttering as she put her favorite teacup on the table and passed me her memo pad.

Her silky silver hair fell straight down to her waist, and her vast blue eyes seemed to just suck me in. Her delicate body was wrapped in a knight's plate armor and gauntlets.

Her face, completely devoid of all emotion, looked up at me.

This very mysterious and strange girl's name was Eucliwood Hellscythe, and she had come from the Underworld.

There was a big round plate on the table, and on the plate were three sheets of okonomiyaki¹. Next to the plate was mayonnaise, a tube of steak sauce, dried seaweed, and a bag of bonito flakes. It was... a late-night snack... right?

And what was the rainbow-colored creamy-looking stuff there?

Was it a "well it's okonomiyaki, so just have it however you want" sort of situation?²

"What's up with this food... It's just a pancake, but it tastes kinda strange..."

That seriously looked like a pancake to Haruna? There was green onion and shrimp in it...

Haruna put her knife and fork to use as she ate the okonomiyaki.

She didn't pour the steak sauce on top; instead, she poured some in a small dish. She tried the okonomiyaki with the sauce, then with mayonnaise, then she tried it with a bit of both... And so, like that, she went on trying a bunch of things.

So that's how she investigates new foods she isn't familiar with...

"Is it good?"

I sat next to Haruna and asked her.

¹ A Japanese style pizza/pancake.

² Okonomiyaki literally means "grilled how you like."

Haruna had her cheeks stuffed full of okonomiyaki and was reaching for her next bite.

“Ish nyah bahd.”

It looked like she was trying to say, “It’s not bad.” If someone as arrogant and proud as Haruna was saying that, then that food had to be delicious indeed.

“Hmm, then, let’s see...”

I hummed a bit as I reached my chopsticks out for a piece of okonomiyaki.

“Hey, stop! Ayumu’s piece is over there!”

Over there? But there’s nothing over...

“Ah! Don’t tell me this rainbow-colored cream thing is...”

“It’s the okonomiyaki I made. I grilled it, but it never hardened, for some reason.”

“You probably tried to make it in some strange way again, didn’t you?”

That testy look on Sera's face made her look like a Vadra Yaksa³. She spoke quietly, but it was clear she was angry.

“How rude... Saying it like that makes it sound like I’m always making things in strange ways.”

That was exactly what I was saying... But I was too much of a coward to say that out loud.

³ Something something Buddhism something something.

“Come on, we saved all that food for Ayumu’s sake.”

“Haruna is quite kind... She’s always leaving a share for Ayumu.”

She’s just running away, isn’t she? Sera should seriously cut it out and realize how dangerous her own food was.

“I’ve always wanted to ask, but has Sera ever tasted her own cooking?”

“Of course I have.”

She has?! And... Wow, she’s still alive!

“You tasted it and it’s still like that?!”

Haruna’s mouth thinned into a triangle and she shouted.

“No, I haven’t tasted this one. Unfortunately... I tasted my cooking once before, and the flavor was so beautiful that I fainted.”

Flavor was beautiful? = *“Heyy, oniichan. Did she just say ‘flavor was beautiful?’ Is she an idiot?”*

Yuu was completely dazed... Well, Yuu always looked like that, though.

“I don’t know what you put in there, but I’m pretty grossed out by it.”

Sera rarely blushed, but she flushed red at Haruna’s words.

“H-how rude! I didn’t use any artificial coloring!”

Honestly, I would have felt better if she did...

What did you put in then? = “Geez~~ What did you put in that thing~~?”

“I put my heart into it... is what I should say here, right?”

So she crammed in all the negative emotions that run rampant in this world?!

“I mixed it with wheat flour and made an okonomiyaki meunière.”

You made a meunière?! So you took something that already has lots of flour in it, then covered it with more flour, sautéed it in butter, and then topped it with lemon juice?

It'd be fine if I stopped there, right? I already did my best to retort to all her comments. So I don't have to eat it anymore, right...?

“And then, for the main dish...”

There was a stone on a hotplate. I heard a *sizzle* as some smoke rose up from it.

“And what is this?” By that point, you couldn't blame me for sounding a bit like a robot... From Haruna's perspective, there probably wasn't much left to say once you started bringing a “main dish” into a late-night snack.

“It's a stone grill...”

Stone grilled what?! When you served “stone grilled X,” the important part was the “X,” right?!

“Please don't underestimate me... If I stopped here, then this would *only* be cooking.”

In a way, I could say I was already completely full! I'd really had enough surprises at that point!

Sera reached out with her chopsticks and grabbed what looked like a dumpling. Then she stuck the dumpling onto the stone.

I heard a small *pop!*, after which the dumpling turned black.

“This is... grilled charcoal.”

“Are you an idiot?”

Today, I sent the usual scornful look that Sera usually gave me right back at her.

As a result... One of the dumplings (which had already turned completely into charcoal) was tossed into my mouth, and in the next moment, I foamed at the mouth as if I had swallowed a huge piece of soap. Then I collapsed.

“So, Ayumu, did you finish your homework?”

Haruna didn’t seem to care about the food anymore, and asked me a question a nosy mother might ask. She probably meant the sign I was making.

“N-nah, I’m not done yet.”

I forced my body up and spoke in a feeble voice.

“I’ll help out, so get it done soon.”

“I don’t need help.”

I will also help.

“It’s fine... I’m almost done anyways. But thanks.”

I gave Yuu a smile, and she squeezed my hand. So cute! Ever since she had come back home, Yuu had just been so amazingly cute!

“Well then! You can help me out!”

“...huh?”

“Well, I mean... Doesn’t the wall in Ayumu’s classroom look a bit boring? So I was thinking we can put up all these monster drawings.”

“The school festival is tomorrow, you know? It’s a bit late-“

“That’s what I’m saying! You all should help out too! There are great monsters out there too!”

I see. So she wanted to put up portraits like the ones in the music room... That’s what she meant, right? I finally understand her.

“That actually sounds kind of interesting... Let’s definitely try it out.”

Sera also seemed to be more into that idea than I would have thought. Yuu also picked up her ballpoint pen, seeming to be filled with motivation.

“All right, I’m gonna go get my sketchbook then!”

Haruna had gotten into a smooth rhythm and cleaned up the hotplate and the “Stone Grilled Whatever, Grilled Charcoal Version.” In the end, I didn’t get to have any of Yuu’s okonomiyaki, did I... Maybe I’ll try to get some in secret later.

Chapter 1: Part 5

So we ended up making random pencil sketches, but...

I couldn't think of anything to draw. Monsters, huh... Monsters, monsters, hmmmmmm... Like, a kappa?¹

"All right, first one up..."

Sera flipped her sketchbook around and showed it to us. Was she done already...?

Eh, Sera's drawing... I-it was... a Maitreya?!

It was the same thing Anderson-kun had drawn! Why did they draw the same thing?!

And that drawing seriously sucked... Was she an elementary schooler or something? ...but I couldn't say that out loud.

"It's a kappa."

It was a kappa?! She really did have an insanely weird sense of aesthetics! That applied to her cooking too.

"I'm also done! Tadaa~~!"

Tadaa. Haruna also held up her sketchbook, showing us a drawing of the husband-wife comedy duo Oshidori. What the hell?! What was that supposed to be?!

"I title this drawing 'the shoji screen has eyes'!"²

¹ Famous Japanese monster that lives in rivers and loves cucumbers.

² There's a bit of a pun here. Shouji here is written as a name, and "has eyes" is "meari = mary." So you could read the title as "Shouji and Mary."

The wall has ears and the shoji screen has eyes! They weren't monsters, they were just normal people!

"What kind of monster is that supposed to be?!"

"A monster that calms you down when you write the kanji for 'person' in your palm three times!"³

"What a good person! What a nice Mr. Actor, always helping out when you're nervous!"

Next, Yuu raised her hand.

Were we on a game show or something? Did we have to show our drawings when we were done with them?

I took a look at Yuu's drawing.

A-amazing... It was a completely lifelike portrait. I had no idea who she had drawn, but... It was probably some Hollywood actor?

It was a drawing of a muscular guy with a feathered bandana. He looked like the kind of dandy that would have existed in the seventies.

"Ahh, it's Thunder Hawk in the middle of his Mexican Typhoon..."⁴

Who the hell was that?! Haruna looked pretty nostalgic as she looked at the drawing...

"So, what about Ayumu?"

³ This is apparently a way to calm down in Japan. Compare to closing your eyes and counting to ten in the West.

⁴ Street Fighter reference.

I showed them the kappa I was in the middle of drawing.

“That sucks.”

I don’t want to hear that from you! Actually, I’m almost happy Sera said that--it meant that my artistic sense was different than hers!

“Yeah, that sucks.”

When Haruna said that to me, I just felt a sense of resignation.

Bad. = *“Try just a bit harder, oniichan!”*

When Yuu said that to me, I felt motivated to try a bit harder.

“All right, let’s all draw another one!”

Haruna raised her hand, so Yuu and Sera both followed and raised their hands. I felt like had no other choice, so I also raised my hand.

“I wish tomorrow would come faster!”

Haruna’s ahoge bounced up and down as she drew.

The school festival... She was really looking forward to it, wasn’t she?

Actually, I had heard that Haruna was always alone when she was at Matelis Magical Academy.

So could it be that, just like me, she had never gone to a school event like a school festival or a culture festival?

...well, I guess I had no choice. Tomorrow... Just tomorrow... I wouldn't scold her even if she went a bit overboard.

It was a festival, after all.

Chapter 1: Part 6

And then, Saturday arrived. I can't remember who suggested it, but this year's school festival would be held at night, and would last from three in the afternoon to ten at night.

We students had to be at school in the morning to prepare, but what was Haruna going to do? Was she going to come as early as someone who was involved with the school, or was she going to come later like a normal participant?

I changed into my uniform and peeked into Haruna's room without knocking.

It used to be my little brother's room, but since then, it had been completely transformed into a girl's room.

The floor was covered with cookbooks and fashion magazines. There was a mountain of "Great Divine Detective Conan" manga there too, and the sheets and curtains had been replaced with ones in brighter colors.

Haruna might not have gotten a single wink of sleep yesterday, since she still seemed to be sleeping. She looked fast asleep, but I could hear her groaning from underneath the covers.

It really seemed as if she had gotten so excited that she couldn't get to sleep.

Though she really didn't look too cute sleeping like that... Anyways, should I wake her or should I let her sleep?

Or maybe I should take a look at her face while she was sleeping?

I wanted to see what her ahoge looked like while she was sleeping, at least a little, so I peeled back her blanket a bit and took a look... And then I saw a girl with tears streaking down her bright-red face.

Her ahoge was completely limp.

“Haruna... Did you catch a cold?”

Geez. She got so excited she got a cold... What irony.

“A-am I...”

She put a hand on her forehead and groaned as she tried to say something with her hoarse voice.

So those groans weren’t actually sleeping sounds...

“Going... to die?”

Her voice shook as she spoke weakly. It was a pessimistic statement that I could never imagine coming out of Haruna’s mouth.

That was when I realized that what was happening here was much more serious than a simple cold.

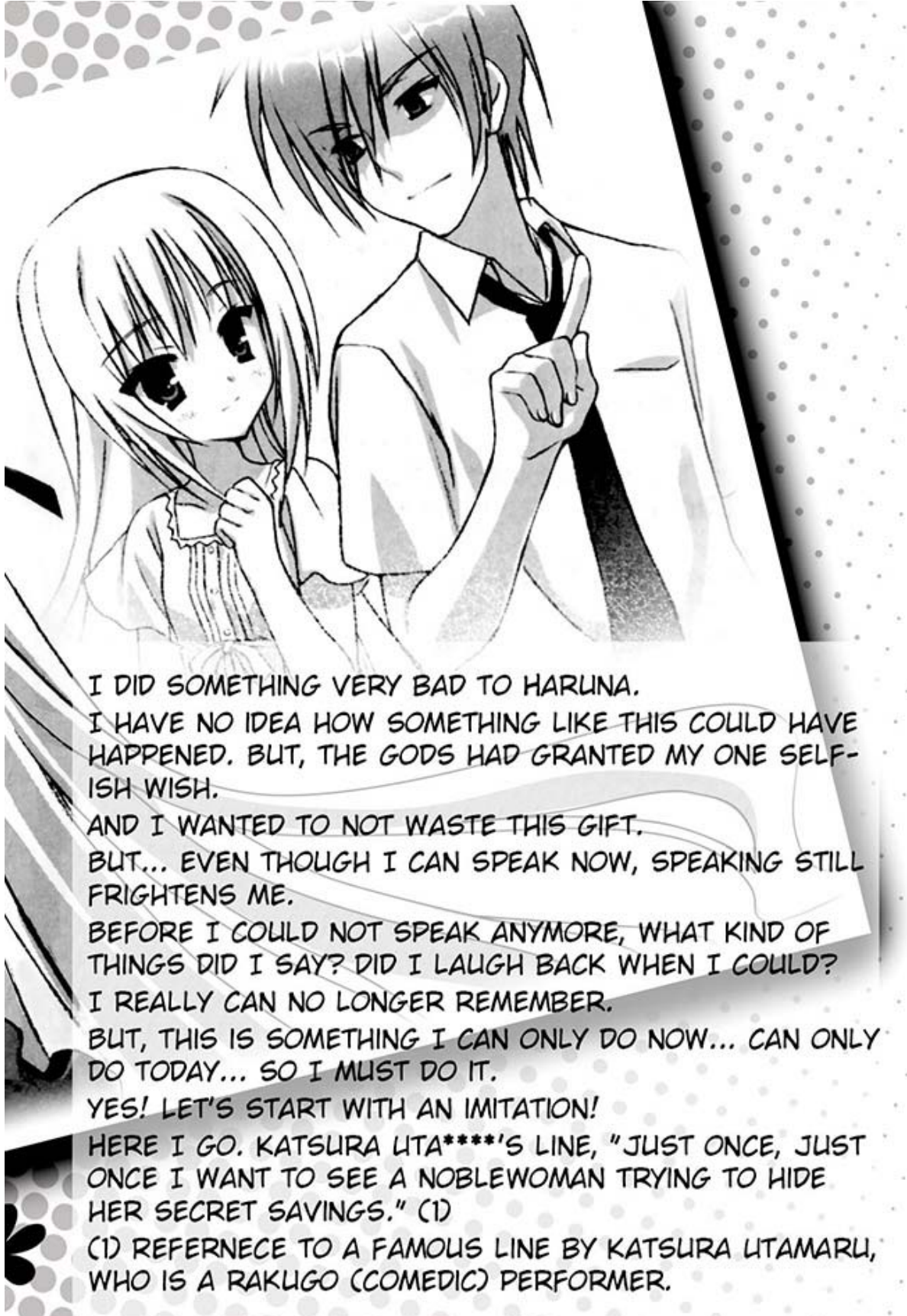
END CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2

**WHEN YOU ASK
SOMEONE FOR
HIS NAME, IT'S
COMMON COUR-
TESY TO ASK IN
SWAHILI!**

I CAN'T DO IT.
I CAN'T DO AN
IMITATION LIKE
THAT IN FRONT
OF OTHER
PEOPLE...





I DID SOMETHING VERY BAD TO HARUNA.
I HAVE NO IDEA HOW SOMETHING LIKE THIS COULD HAVE
HAPPENED. BUT, THE GODS HAD GRANTED MY ONE SELF-
ISH WISH.
AND I WANTED TO NOT WASTE THIS GIFT.
BUT... EVEN THOUGH I CAN SPEAK NOW, SPEAKING STILL
FRIGHTENS ME.
BEFORE I COULD NOT SPEAK ANYMORE, WHAT KIND OF
THINGS DID I SAY? DID I LAUGH BACK WHEN I COULD?
I REALLY CAN NO LONGER REMEMBER.
BUT, THIS IS SOMETHING I CAN ONLY DO NOW... CAN ONLY
DO TODAY... SO I MUST DO IT.
YES! LET'S START WITH AN IMITATION!
HERE I GO. KATSURA UTA****'S LINE, "JUST ONCE, JUST
ONCE I WANT TO SEE A NOBLEWOMAN TRYING TO HIDE
HER SECRET SAVINGS." (1)
(1) REFERNECE TO A FAMOUS LINE BY KATSURA UTAMARU,
WHO IS A RAKUGO (COMEDIC) PERFORMER.

Chapter 2: Part 1

“Ayumu.”

I was startled by that unfamiliar female voice and turned around quickly. Yuu was standing there with a serious expression on her face.

That's right: she wasn't emotionless. Her face clearly showed her feelings.

“Do you have a moment?”

She beckoned to me; the reserved motion was quite Yuu-like, but everything else was strange.

Why? Why was she talking?

Haruna was facing me with a pleading look, her hand still firmly gripping my clothes. She seemed afraid of something.

“Sorry, Yuu, but if you need to talk, then can we do it here?”

Yuu glanced briefly at Haruna, seeming a little unsure, until...

“I understand.”

She sat down right there.

I sat on the bed and put my hand on Haruna's forehead. It was burning... I couldn't bring myself to remind her that today was the school festival.

“I really wasn't sure if Haruna should hear this, but...”

Yuu sounded truly apologetic. She continued to speak, with a meek look on her

face.

“It seems that my power has begun to transfer to Haruna.”

“It can do that?”¹

“I do not know why it is happening. However, Haruna’s current symptoms... They are familiar. I once experienced them myself...”

As soon as I heard that, sudden insight dawned on me.

I looked at Haruna’s chest. The magical energy suction device was still hanging there.

Maybe, just maybe... But...

“So Haruna sucked up all your magical energy...?”

Yuu let out a sigh.

“Yes. I... may have returned too much magical energy.”

“Hm? What do you mean?”

Her explanation wasn't quite what I had expected, so I asked her to clarify.

“I stole Haruna’s magical energy. After that, I met Ayumu, discovered the TV variety shows at your house, and began to watch them every day. I was practicing with the most difficult emotion to suppress: enjoyment.”

So Yuu had an actual reason for watching all those comedy shows?

¹ He is talking about Bufferin, a pain medication whose ad slogan is “Made half with kindness.”

“However, soon after that... There was a comedic sketch that did make me laugh really hard.”

“Yuu did? That’s really unusual...”

“It was a sketch about necromancers, so I just couldn’t help--*ahem*. In any case, I couldn’t stop myself from laughing. And at that time, flying nearby was--”

“--Haruna, right? And that bear Megalo.”

Haruna gripped my hand tightly.

“It was... Kumacchi.”

Yeah, Kumacchi... Sure, now I remember.

“I was returning the magical energy I had stolen from her, but my magical energy is like a poison. When I use a large amount of it, the world changes. I was giving it back to her little by little, bit by bit. Haruna isn't usually near me, though, so I always did it at mealtime.”

I see... When I thought about it, I remembered Haruna saying that this world’s food really replenished her magical energy.

Was that just Yuu giving her magical energy?

“I believe that Ayumu was able to become a masou shoujo because you have simply spent more time with me than Haruna has.”

“You mean... The energy that you wanted to return to Haruna went to me instead?”

“Yes.” As Yuu nodded, Haruna kneed me in the back. Wait, wasn't she supposed to be sick?!

“Haruna’s fever will soon break. However... It is very likely that she will no longer be allowed to feel or speak.”

In other words, once her fever broke, then Yuu’s powers will have finished transferring to Haruna... I see.

Wait! Wasn’t that pretty bad?!

It'd be one thing if she was dedicated as Yuu, but there was no way a walking disaster like Haruna could hold back her emotions or her words!

“I apologize... Last night, when we were all drawing, I thought something. I wished for something.”

Yuu’s blue eyes seemed sad for some reason as they looked at me.

I felt myself being drawn to those eyes--I couldn’t look away from their beauty.

“I wished that I could also enjoy the school festival with Ayumu...”

Tears spilled from those blue eyes of hers. Yuu was probably thinking something like, *“Someone like me should never ever wish to have fun.”*

“But to think... that this would really happen... To think my prayer would be answered... I’m... I’m really sorry.”

Yuu faced Haruna and kneeled, lowering her head to the ground.

I patted Yuu gently on the shoulders.

“Ah, actually, about that... Take a look at this.”

I showed Yuu the pendant that was hanging around Haruna's neck.

"What is this?"

"This idiot genius made this magical power suction device thing. This situation probably isn't your fault at all... It's all on her."

"I see..."

Yuu looked a bit lonely for some reason. Maybe she pitied Haruna, maybe it was something else... But Yuu didn't speak again after that, so I couldn't ask why.

Haruna and Yuu and I all sat there in silence for a while... Then we heard a knock on the door.

"Haruna, it's me."

I heard Sera's pretty voice. I could detect a hint of worry in that voice... It seemed that Sera also knew about Haruna's situation.

Sera had brought a tray with her. I tried to let her take my place, but Haruna wouldn't let go of my shirt sleeve.

Sera let out a small chuckle of resignation and passed me the tray.

On the tray was a cup filled with water, a pill that was rumored to be fifty percent kindness, and a pot filled with concrete... Was that concrete supposed to be rice porridge? She had brought me the same sort of thing when I was stuck in bed, right? Does she not know how to make rice porridge without concrete?!

"Haruna, how are you feeling?"

She spoke in a gentle voice that I had never heard directed at me, a voice so soothing that it could heal even a raging heart. In response...

“...ay.”

It seemed like she wanted to say “I’m okay.” As always, Haruna didn’t want to show weakness in front of Sera and the others.

I couldn’t help but chuckle a bit at that. But then...

“Kuh! Uwaahh! Aghhh!”

Haruna was suddenly wracked with pain and began to roll around in her bed, tearing at her hair.

“Haruna, you can’t let out a sound... No matter how much it hurts.”

Yuu’s voice might not have managed to reach Haruna--she just continued to yell out. Soon, those shouts turned into sobs.

“Ayumu, hold her mouth shut.”

Yuu had a serious expression on her face, so I did as I was told. I put my hand over Haruna’s small cheeky mouth, but it wasn’t the time to enjoy the feeling of her soft lips.

“Yuu, what should I do?”

“If she doesn’t let out a sound, then she can avoid the headaches. It was also a big struggle for me to prevent myself from crying out.”

Even just talking gave Yuu severe headaches... I’d heard that before. But Yuu never let her emotions show on her face, so I had always wondered whether her

headaches were really that painful.

However, when I saw Haruna now...

“Nghh!! Hnnnghhhh!!”

Her eyes were shut tight, lines of strain were forming on her forehead, and she was gritting her teeth as she flapped her legs around and held her head in her arms.

It was so, so painful... It was so painful that she wanted to scream, but if she did that, then the pain would only get worse.

Seeing Haruna now made that obvious.

“Ayumu, water...”

Sera suggested that as she looked on with a worried expression, and I picked up the cup of water from the tray.

“Haruna. Do you want some water?”

Haruna began to furiously nod.

I sat her up on the bed and passed her the cup. As she took it with both hands, her body suddenly sprung up and she dropped it.

The water flew everywhere, covering her pillow and her sheets.

Haruna hurled the fluffy futon away and hugged her arms to herself.

“No... What is this... No... Hyaaaaaaaaahhh!!!”

Her scream echoed through the room.

In response, Yuu removed her own gauntlets and put them on Haruna's hands. As soon as she did, Haruna began to cling to those gauntlets desperately.

"She is already beginning to activate my powers... This is faster than I had expected."

Yuu looked straight at me.

"What... just happened?"

Sera asked the same question that had been on my mind.

"Her hands now have the power to heal. That power can take a wish to heal something and turn it into reality... And when she does, she herself shoulders that thing's pain."

"You mean... That doesn't just apply to people?"

Yuu nodded once.

"The thoughts of inanimate objects are much more frightening... And right now, Haruna experiences all the feelings and all the pain of everything she touches."

The sinking feeling in my stomach got stronger and stronger as Yuu explained things to me.

Sure, I pitied Haruna, but... Yuu had had to live with all of that up until this...

"Can you seal all of that with those gauntlets?"

"Yes... A friend of mine gave them to me. I received them... at a moment when I was afraid of everything... Just like Haruna is right now."

Yuu spoke solemnly as she gazed at the gauntlets.

“Hm... How do we return things to normal...?”

Sera thought, pressing her index finger to her lips.

I see... “Normal” meant that Yuu would, once again, no longer be able to talk.

All the pain that Haruna was feeling would be transferred to Yuu.

I really didn’t know what to do...

“For now... Maybe we should move all of Hellsythe-dono’s equipment to Haruna?”

At Sera’s words, Haruna began to furiously shake her head.

“But then... I can’t dress as the SWAT team anymore.”

“Just give it up... It’s fine. I’m sure SWAT teams in the West dress like this.”

Haruna once again shook her head, tears running down her cheeks... Geez, what a spoiled brat.

“All right, let’s start taking off Haruna’s clothes.”

I reached out and tried to take off her pajamas, when...

“Ayumu, get out out out!”

It seemed she could still shout, even if she had a headache...

And then I got hot concrete poured on top of my head, so I had to tearfully make a beeline for the bathroom.

Chapter 2: Part 2

I left Haruna to Sera and Yuu, so I ended up going to school by myself. I held back my feelings of excitement for the school festival and just stared out the classroom window.

The cloudy sky was a brilliant grey in color. Geez... If I knew the weather was going to be like this, then I wouldn't have put us through the effort of making a nighttime school festival.

“Aikawa.”

When I looked below me, I saw students busy preparing stands. They stretched up the slope, from the school gate to the school courtyard and outer hallway.

“Aikawa~~.”

Today was the festival.

Today was the festival... A festival which happened only once a year, the boisterous and noisy event that Haruna had been looking forward to.

“Hey, Aikawa!”

A spiky-haired guy was standing next to me with his glasses sparkling. He had been standing there for a while.

“What do you want? Standing there with those irritating glasses of yours...”

“What do the glasses have to do with anything?! ...anyway, where’s Haruna-chan? She was so excited about putting up decorations from morning.”

I see. Haruna was that excited about it? ...she must be so frustrated right now.

“What is it, Aikawa? You have a disgusting look on your face.”

Orito flicked me in the forehead as I stood there, looking grim.

“You’re the last person I want to hear that from.”

I rubbed the spot he had flicked and once again turned my gaze out the window.

Then I saw a strangely-dressed young girl weaving her way through the festival stands below...

...a small girl in casual dress, who had dashed up from the school gate.

Her getup was pretty strange, with her gauntlets and plate armor.

The small girl rushed for the school building.

Atop her head, you could see an impressive ahoge bouncing around.

That ahoge... was proof that she was feeling good.

“Huh? That’s... Yuu-chan?”

“Nah, it’s just a masou shoujo.”

Orito gave me a “what the hell are you talking about” look.

After around twenty more seconds...

“Ah, Haruna-sensei.”

Haruna pretty much slid full-force into the classroom and showed me a sketchbook. And written on that sketchbook, in huge round letters, was...

Revival!

She was full of energy, a far cry from emotionless. However, her face seemed frozen into the same expression.

“Haruna-“

Bam! Her flying kick jolted my cheek.

I won't forgive you for living me behind.

Haruna pounded her fists on the sketchbook. You know, I can see it even if you don't whack it like that...

“Are you feeling better now?”

Quiet! Shut your mouth!

Wham! Haruna backhanded me with a gauntleted hand.

“But you said you felt like you were dying-“

Wham! She slammed her sketchbook into my cheek, hitting me so hard that I could swear my head did a 180 degree turn. Why did she have to keep hitting me in the same exact place... She was going to turn me into a plump old zombie.¹

But, I mean... It looked like things had calmed down a bit. She couldn't talk anymore; Yuu's ability to turn her words into reality must have already been activated. Still...

¹ A reference to a Japanese folk tale about old men with lumps on their cheeks. [Here is a translated version.](#)

She was standing there arrogantly, brimming with her usual confidence. If she was trying to keep me from worrying about her... Well, in that case, I had to follow suit and act natural for her as well.

Weak stuff not allowed!

“Got it. Sorry for worrying about you, geez...”

Ayumu worrying about me is the grossest thing in the entire universe.

Seriously, that bad...? I didn’t know if those were her true feelings or not, but I could understand what Haruna was getting at. She had come to enjoy the school festival, so she wasn’t going to tolerate depressing talk.

“Haruna-chan, is that Yuu-chan cosplay? You’re so cute no matter what you wear...”

Shut up. You stupid imbecile.

Those letters cut deeper than spoken words ever could.

Orito cried.

“Haruna-sensei... What’s wrong?”

Hiramatsu couldn’t really hide her bewilderment when greeted by Haruna’s strange state.

“Nah, she’s just confused the SWAT team with the Crusades or something. Also... She has a bit of a cold, so she can’t talk.”

“I see...” Hiramatsu didn’t seem very convinced, but she didn’t press the issue.

All of you, hurry up and get back to work!

Once Haruna took up her command position, everyone naturally began to work at a brisk pace.

The homeroom teacher who *should* have been the one in that command position was just staring out the window like me, and seemed to be thinking about something. As always, what a lazy do-nothing teacher...

The monster drawings I had made yesterday with Yuu and Sera were pasted to the walls.

There was the shouji with eyes, Thunder Hawk, and the Maitr-... I mean the kappa.

When they were lined up like that, there really seemed to be some deeper meaning behind them.

Among those drawings... the “kotatsu lion”² that Yuu had drawn seemed to be really popular with the girls.

“... That’s really cute...”

Hiramatsu looked pretty mesmerized as she stared at the male lion lying under the kotatsu.

At that moment, Tomonori, Anderson-kun, and Mihara came from the class next door.

“Aiiikawa~~! We came to help out!”

² A kotatsu is a low heated table that warms your legs.

Now that I think about it, Tomonori's class was doing some kind of display, right? They probably could put that together pretty quickly.

"By the way, what is *that thing* near the entrance?"

Mihara smiled as she covered her mouth with a hand, and looked at me with a strange expression.

That thing? What did she mean?

I was led out of the classroom by the three of them, and I saw *that thing* right next to the door.

It was the mannequin that looked like me. That bastard Haruna... she hadn't thrown it away!

The students in the hallway weren't even laughing... maybe they were just that impressed. I would have loved it if that continued and the idea of laughing was thrown into oblivion, but Mihara's loud idiotic laughter seemed to break the dam and laughter suddenly overflowed all around me.

I hugged my head, and tried to endure the embarrassment welling up within me even as I fought a ferocious mental battle in my own head.

"But regardless, this is pretty well made."

Anderson-kun hit the mannequin version of me. The mannequin waved from side to side.

"Aikawa is the best!! Ahahahaha!!"

Orito was laughing uncontrollably. I hope he laughs so hard he sets off a nuclear explosion in his head.

Seeing this spectacle, I remained silent and walked back towards the classroom.

“Huh? Hey, Aikawa...”

Tomodori seemed puzzled as she called out to me.

“Aren’t you angry?”

“Ahh, but it really doesn’t matter here...”

Dammit! If Haruna wasn’t in the situation she was in now, I would completely kick her ass... but I couldn’t say anything. At the very least, right now I wanted to let her do whatever ridiculous things she wanted to do.

And ultimately, this feeling that you could almost describe as parental love won against all the embarrassment I was feeling.

Chapter 2: Part 3

As 3:00PM rolled around, the night festival started even though the sun hadn't set yet.

There were some schools that held school festivals which weren't open to general admission, but our school allowed anybody to come. Actually, there were even cases where the neighborhood association helped us out with some of the festival stands.

In fact, this night festival wouldn't exist if it weren't for relationships like that.

I mean, usually, it would be pretty hard to get permission to raise such a ruckus at night.

We had declared that we were opening up a monster café, but in the end we were just a yakisoba¹ shop. Well, it's not like you could do much more than that at a school festival.

We also served drinks. We had normal coffee, and then to make it seem a bit more monster-ey we had tomato juice. Also, there was this Hakkaisan Kongoushin... wait, that was really expensive sake! Who the hell brought sake to a school festival...?!

"Alright, sensei is going to stay here and be the first customer to attract more, so you all can just feel free to do whatever."

Our homeroom teacher, "tasteless and odorless," clapped his hands and issued his commands to the students. This good-for-nothing teacher... he bought that damn sake for himself, didn't he?

¹ Grilled Noodles.

“Kufuu~~, sake is good. It makes me feel like my old self again.”

I turned away from my teacher as he downed his first cup, and joined a circle of other students to talk.

In the end, it was decided that my shift in the shop would start at 5PM.

Should I maybe walk around the school until then?

I checked to see how much money I had in my wallet when Haruna’s gauntleted hand grabbed onto my blazer.

“Haruna-“

Ayumu. Let’s go.

I saw an energetic young girl in front of me. It seemed that she was now fully prepared to enjoy this school festival that had just started, this school festival she had been looking forward so much for.

She wasn’t emotionless at all, but her face was stuck in that almost annoying Haruna-like smile I was used to.

“Are you okay?”

More than okay! She gave me a thumbs up.

“What about Sera and Yuu? If we’re gonna go around we should do it togeth-“

Shut up! Hurry up and let’s go!

Haruna took my hand with a grumpy expression on her face.

And then...

“Ah-...”

A guy was making yakisoba for our homeroom teacher (the first customer), when his hand slipped and that metal spatula thing... that thing you saw a lot when people cooked on flat-iron grills... what was it called again? It wasn't just a spatula... oh, right, a trowel. His trowel flew towards me.

But I had spent so long trying to think of the word that I hadn't even bothered to dodge, and the corner of the metal part went right into my eye...

“A-Aikawa-kun!”

Hiramatsu ran towards me. Ahh, she sure was a nice girl.

On the other hand, Haruna was holding her mouth with her hands. She didn't look like she was trying to muffle a cry of alarm. Rather, she was trying not to laugh. Ah, right, if she laughed she would get a headache.

“Are... you okay...?”

To be honest, I really wasn't. If I weren't a zombie, I would have been blinded there.

Well then, the true question here was whether this was a pure accident.

Or maybe, it was because Haruna was so excited for this school festival that bad things would happen to the person closest to her right now (which was me).

Was something as ridiculous as that happening here?

Or maybe this was just pure bad luck?

“Aikawa-kun...”

“Don’t worry. It’s nothing... Haruna, let’s go.”

If Haruna really was to blame for that, then it would be best if we didn’t go around the school festival with too many people.

And I mean, it wasn’t a bad thought to walk around the school together with Haruna.

I’ll look for Yuu and Sera after I’m done hanging out with Haruna and then we can look around again together.

Chapter 2: Part 4

So, like that, the school festival began and I began walking around along with Haruna.

For now, I made sure to warn Haruna for the third time that she shouldn't show any emotions, but Haruna didn't want to. It was natural for someone who didn't really care about what happened to the people around her.

"You can't even do that but you want to be the strongest masou shoujo?"

My random challenge seemed to strike a nerve, and Haruna then promised me she would stay calm.

Well then, it's time to go around the school with this girl dressed in gauntlets and plate armor and sporting an ahoge.

As expected, there were a lot of classes doing cafés or haunted houses.

We went into a few cosplay cafés and slightly strange haunted houses together. You know, I'm probably one of the first zombies who's gone into a haunted house.

I mean, there's no way a zombie would be scared of ghosts or anything like that.

It was getting dark, so we headed out into the school courtyard, and there we saw stands lined up like it was some kind of festival. There was a water balloon fishing game, Japanese sponge cake, grilled squid, grilled octopus, grilled noodles... ah, that one was the same as the stuff our class was doing.

In any case, this festive atmosphere almost made you want to go put on a kimono.

Of all those booths, the one that seemed to really attract Haruna's attention was the Comedy Club's "Beat the Fool Hotdog Stand."

Taking a closer look, I saw the words "No Tsukkomi, No Service!"¹ written on their sign. I see, so that was their system.

Someone as proud as Haruna was easy to hook with challenges like that.

"Welcome. How about some French fries?"

The stand worker quickly recommended the French fries to us, but there were no French fries on the menu.

In fact, what was on the menu was... Haircut 3000 yen, Perm 5000 yen, Shampoo 180000 yen. They had even set it up so that you could yell at them over their prices.

Well then, how exactly was Haruna going to respond in this case?

She wrote a few words on her memo pad, and showed the pad to the shop tender while pointing to "Perm 5000 yen."

Tonkotsu ramen please.²

She responded to stupidity with more stupidity!

The Comedy Club faltered at this unexpected turn of events.

"I see I see I see I see... this soy sauce ramen, yes? Here you go... hey wait just a second!"

¹ This is in reference to a classic form of Japanese comedy, where the fool (boke) says stupid things and is retorted to by the sane person (tsukkomi).

² Tonkotsu = pork bone soup.

It seemed that our school's Comedy Club wasn't really that good when on the retorting side. Could it be that because of that, they made this shop so they could steal other people's retorts?

Haruna wrote some more words on her memo pad.

Please give me some tonkotsu ramen.

That idiot took one step forward. She pressed the Comedy Club down like a rook in shogi getting promoted.

"No, umm... this is a hot dog stand..."

"That was a normal response! Don't give up, Comedy Club!"

"Well, we never thought... that someone would come at us from this angle."

Haruna flipped a page on her memo pad without even writing anything.

Give me some authentic-style tonkotsu ramen please.

"She raised the ramen stakes now!"

And to think she had written that in advance!

After I was the one who decided to retort, the Comedy Club seemed to admit defeat and just silently passed a hot dog to Haruna.

"Your total is... actually, it's fine."

That was an admission of utter defeat.

What kind of Comedy Club is so afraid of someone acting stupid that they can't act stupid back?

Haruna shook her head in resignation and flipped another page on her memo pad.

Maybe they should just become the Quiz Show Research Club or something. Like Oda Nobunaga or something.³

I don't think there's any reason to believe that Oda Nobunaga liked quiz shows!

The Comedy Club just stood there as if they had just been struck by lightning.

To think she had even prepared those parting shots in advance. As expected from a genius... it was impossible for a mere mortal like me to guess what this idiot girl would do next.

"Thank you very much for your business!"

Like that, Haruna received three hot dogs as her spoils of war.

And just in case you were wondering, she didn't give me a single one of them.

The minute Haruna began to happily bite into her hot dogs, the wind began to blow stronger.

I saw the skirt of a girl walking in front of us flutter upwards. Maybe it was just a guy thing or some kind of animal instinct, but I stopped right where I was and crouched down.

And then...

³ Unifier of Japan in the late 1500s.

The “No Tsukkomi, No Service!” sign smacked me right in the back of the head.

... Thinking guilty thoughts was not a good thing.

Was what just happened also because Haruna was feeling happy?

Haruna also seemed to think that was the case. She showed me a rare look of remorse.

“As I thought, white panties are the best panties.”

When I changed the topic to the panties I hadn’t even seen, Haruna whammed me on the tailbone with the “No Tsukkomi, No Service!” sign and quickly tossed me a memo.

You pervert! Full ero throttle!

Good. Seeing you energetic like this is what I want.

“Sounds almost like a new slang term there.”

I said that and showed Haruna a smile.

Chapter 2: Part 5

After getting our fill of the many stands in the courtyard, Haruna and I headed for the gymnasium.

It seemed like they were putting on music performances and plays in the gym, but if we stayed for those we wouldn't be able to make it back in time.

Around half the audience in the gym was comprised of people in headbands who looked like they were part of some new defense force. It was almost as if they had come to cheer on some jpop group like the Onyanko Club or something... was some strange idol coming?

In any case, the gym didn't feel like a very comfortable place to be in, so we headed for the old school building next. This place was close to the sports grounds, so almost all the rooms had been taken over by the sports clubs. For someone like me who didn't belong to any club, this was a place I had very little to do with.

When I was just about to go into the baseball club room, I heard someone call out to me.

"Oh, Aikawa, come over here~~."

It was Mihara, who was waving to me in a tank top with her long brown hair tied up. That was the basketball team uniform, wasn't it?

Hmm... the girls' basketball team uniforms sure did strike the eye. Oh, and her player number was fourteen?

"Doesn't look like there's a lot of people coming around here."

"Nah, we've had plenty of people come. I guess this is just good timing... also,

Haruna-sensei, that's quite some getup there. There was something like that lying around Aikawa's house?"

Mihara gave us a teasing smile. It seemed she was curious about Haruna's Western-style armor.

"Ahh, well... you know, my parents travel a lot..."

I gave a rather vague and mysterious response, but Mihara seemed to pick up on the nuance and gave an "ahh" of understanding.

"Oh? Aikawa's here?"

A tall young man appeared smiling. He was a good-natured, handsome guy with blue eyes. His name was Shimomura, but his nickname was Anderson-kun.

"Anyways, come see what we've got! And afterwards, spread the word!"

Mihara took me by the hand and bounced up and down. Yeah yeah, I gotcha...

So for that reason, I was pulled by Mihara into the basketball team's classroom.

The room itself wasn't very large, and lockers lined the walls on my left and right.

In between those lockers some box was set that looked like a whack-a-mole game made out of cardboard boxes.

"200 yen and you get three free throws."

A tall girl who was handling the reception desk told me that, and I paid the 200 yen. I was then handed a homemade ball the size of a baseball that was made out of what seemed to be wadded up newspapers and packing tape.

I see, free throws. So I had to toss the ball into the holes in that whack-a-mole thing, and then I would win a prize. So it was like that.

“What are the prizes?”

I began to toss the first ball as I asked that.

“The special prize is an Indian elephant.”

I felt myself jump at hearing that unexpected prize, and I ended up completely missing the holes.

“So you’re seriously going to give me an Indian elephant if I win it?”

“Ahaha, you won’t win it. The closest hole is for a drink. That one in the middle is for potato chips, the one behind that is for a refrigerator, that one is for a Hawaiian vacation... and then, that last one is for an Indian elephant.”

The basketball team laughed around me. They probably had just used the Indian elephant as a joke. Taking a closer look, I saw a few holes in the whack-a-mole box, but some were clearly smaller than the others. Small enough that this ball would definitely not fit.

I thought I would try to force the ball in using my zombie power, so I set up my throw, not like a free throw, but a baseball pitch... and then I threw it.

Ping! The ball was repelled back and fell into the hole closest to us.

“Hooray, winner! Would you like a coffee or a soda?”

“... Coffee.”

I was handed a single 100-yen can of coffee, and I had one ball left.

Next is me.

Haruna raised her gauntleted hand.

“Alright, Haruna. Go for the Indian elephant.”

Haruna didn’t show any emotion but gave me a firm thumbs up.

“Ahahaha. As I said, it’s pointless to try. The hole is way too small-“

Scwhpp! The ball fell right into the special prize hole, even though it was supposed to be bigger.

It was kind of like watching one of those strange magic acts where a magician tosses a big coin right into a bottle.

“No way...”

All the balls that went into the box rolled towards the bottom of the box, so it wasn’t really possible to check which hole the ball had really gone in.

But everyone should have seen that. When I saw the stunned looks on Mihara and that reception girl’s faces, I knew that what I had seen had definitely happened.

I took my hand out of my blazer pocket and patted Mihara on the shoulder.

“I’m really looking forward to that Indian elephant.”

I must have looked like a debt collector right there. Mihara shook in fear and bowed her head down.

“T-That’s not possible! It’s just not! I’m really sorry!”

One more time.

It seemed that Haruna had gotten really into this game, and I paid another 200 yen.

First ball: Hawaii vacation.

Second ball: Hawaii vacation.

Third ball: Indian elephant.

“Two Indian elephants and two trips to Hawaii. I guess for 400 yen that’s not too bad.”

“Why? Why is it going in?”

Mihara and the other club members went over and tried to force the ball into the small hole. But the ball wouldn’t go in.

“How did you do it?”

Mihara and the others looked to Haruna, wanting her to explain the trick.

It’s plain to see that I just shrunk it with a barrier and made it rod-shaped.

I see. This was just newspaper, so a masou shoujo like Haruna could probably change it to whatever shape she wanted. And also, Haruna right now was brimming with magical energy.

“You can have your money back... so please just let us off the hook!”

“Ehh? But we won the prizes...”

Everyone in the room probably hated me at that moment. Maybe I was teasing them a bit too much.

I let out a huge laugh to dispel the awkward feeling in the air, and everyone else also joined in.

Except for Haruna of course, since she couldn't laugh.

In the end, I managed to get away with a free can of coffee, and we headed towards the track team's room next.

I wanted to just check in with Tomonori since it was on the way.

"A-Aikawa!"

When I went into the track team's room, I saw Tomonori standing there in a swimsuit.

She was red from ear to ear and holding some kind of sign.

There were no other track team members in the room.

The only people there were Tomonori in that extreme getup... and Yuu.

Her usual gauntlets and plate armor were now in Haruna's possession, so right now she was wearing...

... Huh? ... Why? Why was she wearing a bunny girl outfit?

Eh? Was this a reward? Was I being rewarded right now? This was just beyond incredible!

More importantly, the only people here were Yuu and Tomonori?

What were they doing alone in a small room like this?

I felt a bit like I was watching a scene from some detective novel unfold in front of me.

Where were the other track team members? I couldn't see any kind of festival exhibit in this room.

All there was here was Tomonori in a bikini... but actually, she sure had a nice body. She would probably look amazing if she stripped...

Were all vampire ninjas just beautiful like this? I guess vampires were definitely famous for being beautiful. On the inside she was a tomboy, but to think she could be so... wait, shouldn't I be saying something to Tomonori right now?

"Tomonori, please explain what's going on here. Why are you wearing that at a place like this, and why are you squatting and rolling into a ball like a roly-poly when you see me?"

"Umm... that's..."

"We're selling CDs."

Yuu answered me.

Taking a second look, I could see now that there was a CD stand set up and there were a lot of CDs lined up on there. You could see the covers of all the CDs. Were these... Haruna's CDs? This was Sera here... and this one had Tomonori pictured. When in the world did they make these?

"So, why exactly is the track team selling these?"

“To be honest, the track team didn’t really know what to do for the school festival, when Master showed up...”

For some reason, Tomonori kneeled before us and looked like she was about to confess to a murder or something.

“... So you ended up having to sell these CDs... but why are you selling Haruna’s CDs and not something made by the track team?”

“To be honest, everyone in our team didn’t really care about the school festival... so they didn’t want to do anything. But my class isn’t doing anything but a display, so I wanted to actually do something more for the festival...”

“So in the end, you put on a bikini and started selling CDs?”

First we sell five hundred thousand copies. And then we aim for a million copies.

Haruna gripped her fist in determination. That phrase sounded awfully familiar... it was like something I had once heard from a game creator... who made a game that couldn’t even be bought unless you had the necessary rights...¹

“So why is Yuu dressed like that?”

“Because it’s all my fault...”

Yuu probably felt responsible for what had happened to Haruna... at any rate, she probably said something to the effect of “I’ll do anything if it’s for Haruna,” and Haruna probably mercilessly thrust this task on her.

¹ A reference to Opoona, a game produced by Koei for the Wii. The game was super hyped but you apparently needed proper rights to even buy it, and it was also significantly overshadowed by the concurrent release of Mario Galaxy. Needless to say, the game suffered from poor sales and also became the butt of many jokes on 2chan.

“But I mean, if Tomonori is here in a swimsuit and Yuu is here in a bunny girl outfit, these CDs should sell really well, shouldn’t they?”

“Well...”

Tomonori looked extremely apologetic as she looked down and played with her index fingers and mumbled. Yuu picked up where Tomonori had left off.

“We haven’t sold a single copy.”

Hearing that, Haruna’s face twisted from the shock.

At that moment... it felt almost as if an earthquake had struck, and all the CDs that were decorating the stand fell to the floor.

And in case you were wondering, the CD stand hit me on the head.

“Haruna, please don’t show any emotion.”

Yuu stared right at Haruna.

Ahh, I forgot! Haruna seemed to want to say. She stopped and took a deep breath.

Tomonori picked up the CDs from the floor and returned them to the stand. I also helped out.

Wasn't there anyone who bought this, even as a joke?

“No, I wonder why... it’s really a mystery.”

I picked up one of the CDs with Haruna on the cover and took a good look at it.

200,000 yen, with tax.

As if this would sell! Was she an idiot? Also, anybody who didn't know why this wasn't selling was also an idiot!

The song titles were written on the back cover.

It seemed that no matter who was on the CD cover, the contents were the same.

There were four songs in total.

Broken Heart Magnum// Haruna.

Crazy Snowman// Seraphim.

Together with my Friend// Yoshida Yuki.

Necromancy// Eucliwood Hellscythe (Instrumental)

It was an instrumental! Yuu actually had a song in here! I guess she really couldn't sing when they recorded this.

I guess there's no other choice. I'll stay here and help sell them.

"I see. Should I help too?"

The minute I suggested that, I was tossed out of the room like some naughty brat being tossed out of his house.

What the hell.

If someone as disgusting as Ayumu is here, even the things that could sell wouldn't!

What the hell! Was there something that could be sold here?!

As I felt myself filling with regret for not being able to enjoy the sights of Tomonori in her swimsuit and Yuu in her bunny outfit for a bit longer, I left the sports club rooms in the old school building by myself.

Chapter 2: Part 6

I wanted to enjoy the school festival, but I couldn't have fun at all by myself.

This experience just reconfirmed the fact to me that festivals were meant to be enjoyed with others. Maybe I should even go and hang out with Orito... Yuu and Tomonori had been taken by Haruna, and I didn't see Sera anywhere.

Looking around me, I saw that very few people were roaming around by themselves. There were a lot of couples, and many of them had probably used this school festival as an opportunity to confess.

As I enjoyed my 'people watching', I felt my eyes suddenly drawn to one girl.

She was a small girl wearing a white Gothic Lolita outfit. If you compared Haruna with a cat, then this girl seemed like a squirrel.

I didn't know if she was in elementary school or middle school, but for some reason she was holding a bottle of "Koshino Bairi" sake and sitting down on the stairs.

... It was the ghost! This was the girl making the grilled squid in the science classroom, wasn't this?!

"Fnyohh~~."

I thought I would just leave her alone, but she let out a weird-sounding sigh, so I sat down next to her.

"... What d'you want? Fnyohh~~."

The girl glared at me from the corner of her eyes. Was her face that red because she had been crying?

“Hi little girl. What’s your name?”

“When you ask someone for their name, it’s common courtesy to ask in Swahili!”

She let out a cackle. Well, now that she’s made that joke...

“Jila lako ni nani?” I asked her for her name in Swahili.

“Hnn? What the hell are you going on about?”

The world was such an unfair place. She was looking at me like I was an idiot.

“At least just tell me your name.”

“Hnn...” she pursed her lips for a bit. “It’s Chris, obviously.” She said that as if I should already know.

Chris... Kurisu... where have I heard that name before...?

Ah, wasn’t our homeroom teacher’s name Kurisu Takeshi? To think that old man would have such a saucy and cute little daughter...

I see, she was at school back then because she had been waiting for him, wasn’t she? She wasn’t some ghost, but had just come to school to meet her old man who was working late, and then out of curiosity went to the science room and grilled some squid. Right?

“I’m Aikawa Ayumu.”

“Yeah? So what? Fnyohh~~.”

“There’s that strange sigh again... what are you doing here exactly?”

“Hnn... I got chased out. ‘If you’re gonna drink sake then do it outside’ they said to me!”

Gulp gulp gulp. She tipped back the sake bottle and drank straight from it. So she seriously was drinking?!

“Did something... happen?”

“Hnnnn... you’ll listen to me? You’ll listen to Chris’s story?”

It sounded like something bad had happened. Well, I guess I’m not surprised since she has that good-for-nothing teacher as a dad.

“Go ahead. I’m used to listening to other people’s complaints.”

“Well, you know... umm it was that thing. You know, that thing. Yeah. Do you know how many years it took for Chris to finish that thing?!”

I have no idea. What, did her jigsaw puzzle get messed up or something? She was being way too vague, so I couldn’t even guess what she was talking about.

“The theory was perfect. No, the theory was too perfect!”

Gulp gulp gulp. She sent more of the “Koshino Bairei” sake down her throat, holding the bottle with both hands.

“Nyoh~~. Ehehehe. A girl can’t live without sake, am I right?”

..... I didn’t say a word, but just confiscated her sake bottle.

“Hey! What are you doing?! Don’t do that...”

“Ahh, there there there there...”

I pet her head, perhaps a bit strongly. And then...

“Nyoh nyoh nyoh nyoh~~... what magic fingers... h-hey, stop!”

She closed her eyes and seemed to be enjoying it, but then her expression turned stern and she shook my hand off.

“Well, what then? What did you fail at?”

“..... Hn. Right. I succeeded too much, and it turned into a failure.”

“So, you proceeded more results than were necessary?”

“Yeah, something like that. And it turned into that... fnyoh~~.”

She let out a sigh and tried to snatch back the sake bottle, so I sent a karate chop right to her head.

“Hmph! That’s Chris’s sake! Give. It. Back!”

The little girl waved her hands around, but I could barely feel her short small hands as they whacked me. It had nothing to do with the fact that I was a zombie.

But... huh? Did her arms just get longer? She hadn’t been able to reach the sake bottle a moment ago, but now she had grabbed onto it.

It was almost like... her body was growing or something... was it just my imagination?

“Ah, I can’t take it anymore! You can see I’m not gonna beg you but give it back! Aikawa you moron!”

“When you’re asking someone for something, you should be sure to call them

‘oniichan.’”

“Give it back... oniichan.”

Ahh, that was pretty cute. I almost immediately gave her the sake bottle back. That was close.

“Oniichan! I don’t like this... give it back!”

The little girl almost pushed me to the floor trying to get her sake back.

At the moment when she almost succeeded in grabbing it back... the vice principal found us.

“Hey! What are you doing with a sake bottle?!”

His yell left my ears ringing and he came towards us. The “Koshino Bairi” bottle was taken away. This was bad. I could get suspended for something like this.

“This belongs to Kurisu-sensei.”

At my voice, the little girl began to shake and she stood up.

I’m not talking about you, you idiot. Sit back down. But before I could tell her that, she ran off at full speed.

I explained the situation to the vice principal. I told her that my homeroom teacher Kurisu had a daughter, and his daughter had been holding onto this sake bottle. And that I had confiscated it from her.

“What are you talking about? Kurisu-sensei isn’t married. He doesn’t have a daughter.”

He doesn't have a daughter? Then... who was that girl just now? As I watched the girl's retreating back... I couldn't help but suspect that she was a special kind of being like Yuu.

Chapter 2: Part 7

For now, I succeeded in convincing the vice principal that the sake belonged to Kurisu-sensei. I mean, Kurisu-sensei *had* been drinking sake in the classroom, so in the end only the sake bottle got taken away, and I was let go.

As I sighed about having run into another strange person, I found myself walking around the pool area. But there was nothing here except for a tree. It seemed that there were places in the school that weren't being used for the festival.

This tree was named the "Tree of Legend," and it was said that any love confessions you made under it would definitely come true.

It looked like this was a wasted trip. Maybe I should go back to Yuu and Tomonori... going around alone like this seriously wasn't fun.

"Aikawa Ayumu-kun... was it?"

I heard my name and turned around. I saw a man in a white coat with stubble on his chin sitting there. He had a mat laid out under that withered broadleaf tree, and looked like he was flower watching or something.

... I could have sworn he wasn't there a minute ago.

I suddenly prepared myself for a possible fight.

The thing that caught my attention the most was that his cuffs were dyed red.

And that... wasn't the kind of red you would get with a paintbrush. It was blood. I had come to know the sight of blood well, so I was pretty confident in that assertion.

"If you stiffen up like that, it's going to be pretty hard to talk."

He held his head in his hand while taking out a cigarette from somewhere in his white coat.

I don't remember ever seeing a teacher like him. And he obviously wasn't a student either. But he also didn't look like a normal person. Normal people didn't wander around wearing white coats like that.

"Who are you?" I managed to mumble those words.

The man tap tapped his cigarette on the box a few times and put it in his mouth.

"Got a light?"

"Why would I have something like that?"

"Yeah, guess you're right... hmm... ah, here we go."

Talking to this guy felt completely pointless... I didn't feel like I was getting any feedback from him at all.

The man lit his cigarette with his lighter and filled his lungs with nicotine.

"Fhhshhhhh."

And when he exhaled the smoke...

Cough cough hack hack cough!

He spit out blood. What the hell?! Huh? What? Did I do something wrong?

"Crap... my doctor... ordered me to stop smoking..."



If you spat up blood and collapsed when you smoke, then at least remember that, dammit!

His sleeve cuffs were red because he was wiping his mouth, weren't they?!

"What the hell is wrong with you..."

"Aikawa Ayumu... kun."

He almost looked like he was dying as he beckoned to me. I let out a sigh and approached.

"If I die... remember to put out my cigarette."

"I got it. I'll pray for your happiness in the next life, so don't worry about it and just die."

Cough cough. Once again, he spit out an abnormal amount of blood. It was like watching the Merlion statue in Singapore spit out water from its mouth... that was how much blood he was spitting out. I took a step back so I wouldn't get any blood on me.

"Are you alright?"

"That doctor also ordered me to stop trying to look stylish... *cough!*"

"Don't worry! You don't look stylish at all! Just stop it already!"

"Ugh! Just try your best, just try your best... great!"

"What are you, a Gundam Buster pilot or something?!"¹

¹ A reference to Dearka Elsman from Gundam.

“You’re dating yourself there... when you hear ‘great!’ what you should think about is frosted flakes... *Cough cough!* Ugh! I forgot. My doctor ordered me not to talk about obscure things-“

“You’re seriously annoying! If you don’t have anything more to say, I’m leaving. Don’t cause trouble and I hope you enjoy the rest of the school festival.”

“W-Wait, Aikawa Ayumu-kun. I have something for you...”

He held out a ring to me with a hand stained red with blood.

Even if I was the girl engaged to you and this was our marriage ring, I wouldn’t want to take it in a million years. I’m sure those feelings were showing on my face.

“I can’t take strange things from strange people. My parents didn’t raise me that way.”

“I see... then, buy it from me.”

“Huh?”

“This is really quite a nice item. And, Aikawa Ayumu-kun... in the future you may need it. Indeed, in the third chapter of this fourth volume- *cough cough cough!* Ugh! Spoilers were forbidden by my do-“

“I got it, I got it! I’ll buy it. How much is it?”

“A hundred trillion yen.”

“Alright, here’s a hundred yen.”

I gave the man a single hundred-yen coin, and I received this strange ring in return.

It was a simple ring with just a small jewel attached. It might not look bad on a girl, but obviously I didn't put it on and just thrust it in my blazer pocket.

"So, who exactly are you?"

I tried asking that one more time, but there was nobody there anymore.

There was just a puddle of blood on the ground, slowly spreading out.

Geez... first that drunk little girl, and now this man who was spitting out blood... I had met a lot of strange people today.

I sighed and looked up at the school building.

I had a bad feeling about all of this. I had met some strange people. And I remembered that this kind of thing happened more easily when Yuu showed emotions. But right now, it wasn't Yuu who was the key player – it was Haruna.

There was no way that idiot could suppress her emotions.

But even so, I had no intention of going and lecturing her.

If she was having fun, then for now that was all I wanted.



YOU BASTARDS!!! WHY?! WHY HASN'T THIS CD I
PRODUCED BROKEN A MILLION IN SALES?!
IT'S BECAUSE THAT GLOOMY NECROMANER AND YUKINORI
AREN'T ATTRACTIVE ENOUGH, RIGHT?!
IF THAT'S WHY, THEN I'LL JUST SELL THEM MYSELF!
NOW, WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO SELL STUFF IN THIS
SCHOOL...?
HUH? THERE'S A TREE OF LEGEND?! THERE, THEN! THAT'S
THE BEST PLACE FOR ME!
FU FU FU. HUH? WHAT'S UP WITH THIS TREE? THERE'S A
BUTTON ATTACHED. AS EXPECTED FROM THE TREE OF
LEGEND.
TIME TO PUSH THIS SUCKER...



Chapter 3: Part 1

As I walked through the hallway back to class, I passed by a few people who were rudely whispering under their breaths as they looked at me.

It almost seemed like they were chuckling at the sight of my face.

That didn't make me feel all too good.

What was it? Did my face look weird or something? Or did someone tape something strange to my back?

My zipper was fine, and when I went into a bathroom and looked in the mirror, I didn't see anything particularly off about my face.

But when I finally got back to my classroom, I realized why everyone had been laughing.

"Ah, it's the man himself." "He's come!" "Uwah, it's the guy himself!"

That mannequin that looks exactly like me... the one in that pose from that old comedy sketch... it was still standing outside our classroom door.

I had completely forgotten about this thing.

I wanted to get rid of it right away, but where exactly was I supposed to carry this huge thing? There were people everywhere in the school right now.

I heard more whispers around me and felt a bit ashamed as I headed for the door.

The door on the blackboard side of the room was shut tight, but the door in the rear was open wide.

I see. That mannequin was there to direct people to the right entrance.

But don't take this zombie lightly. How many embarrassing experiences do you think I've been through up until now? Just a bit of embarrassment like this was nothing...

Is what I tried to tell myself... but no. These few days had been so embarrassing that I just wanted to erase these memories from all of existence.

But in the end, I also had to pat myself on the back for making a pretty damn good sign.

The inside of our room was splendidly decorated, and you could swear you had just walked into the middle of a Hollywood movie set. I'll leave the details up to your imagination, but I'll just leave you with one adjective: three-dimensional. As I gave myself a standing ovation, I headed for the other side of the door curtain, which had drawings of monsters on it.

The only customer was our homeroom teacher, nicknamed "Unconsciousness." Perhaps it had been confiscated by the vice principal, but he was no longer drinking sake. And that was probably the reason he looked so grumpy.

It really looked like the café wasn't doing too well.

When I was walking around the school festival, I had certainly seen plenty of other eye-catching and unique attractions.

And also, the food we were serving was pretty similar to the food at the food carts and the cosplay cafés, so why would people choose to go to a monster café? It was just bad on the eyes.

... I guess our monster café idea was a failure.

Or maybe all this was because that teacher, nicknamed “clueless,” was sitting there and sighing continuously like he was deep in thought about something?

Usually, our tiny room was filled with desks and chairs, but all that had been replaced by a few fashionable round tables and small round chairs with low backs. There was only one normal desk and chair next to the entranceway, and a girl dressed as a yuki onna¹ was sitting there selling meal tickets.

You could buy one of these tickets and sit down, and then exchange the ticket for some yakisoba.

“Aikawa-kun... welcome back.”

Hiramatsu, who was wearing a red skirt, welcomed me with a smile.

She wore a nametag near her chest, on which was written “Hanako-san of the Toilet”². She was dressed in kiddy fashion, but maybe it was because she had such a gentle personality, or maybe it was because her breasts were so big...

I shook my head back and forth. If I had to sexually harass anyone, I’d keep it to Sera and Haruna.

More importantly, was “Hanako-san of the Toilet” really a monster? Well, whatever.

There were other people dressed as strange entities (I wouldn’t really call those things monsters though...), but everyone was wearing a nametag so even the uninitiated could understand what they were.

There was someone wearing a green outfit and a turtle shell, and his nametag said “kappa.”

¹ Literally “snow girl.” Famous Japanese youkai/monster which freezes its victims.

² Based on an urban legend, that if you go to a school’s bathroom alone at night you can call forth some apparition of a girl with bobbed hair, red skirt and white shirt. Her name is “Hanako-san of the Toilet.”

There was someone with a padded sleeveless kimono jacket, and his nametag said “Kitarou.”³

There was someone wearing tights over his entire body, and his nametag read “Mojimoji-kun.”⁴

M-Mojimoji-kun? Mojimoji-kun wasn’t even a supernatural thing, let alone a monster...

“I thought it was time for the shift switch, but...”

As I gazed at everyone dressed in the room as monsters, I checked with Hiramatsu.

“Yeah... Aikawa-kun... should be switching with... with Orito-kun.”

For some reason, it seemed like she had a hard time getting that out...

Orito... Orito... I looked around the room for him.

There were three hotplates set up in a corner of the room. And Orito was cooking the yakisoba there.

Ah, so he was one of the chefs. That made sense... stuff like setting the table and collecting tickets were best left to girls like Hiramatsu.

Although, what exactly was up with Orito’s outfit? It looked like a wedding dress, but what kind of monster was he trying to imitate? He was wearing an apron, so I couldn’t see his nametag from here.

³ A reference to the titular character of the manga “Gegege no Kitarou.”

⁴ A reference to a set of characters in a comedy sketch by the Tunnels (a famous comedy duo, although I get the feeling that the Korezon author is dating himself a bit here...)

“Hey, Hiramatsu. What monster is Orito supposed to be? I can’t see his nametag.”

“A-... Aikawa-kun. Umm... that is...”

For some reason, Hiramatsu seemed flustered about something.

“Even an honors student like Hiramatsu doesn’t know?”

It’s not like being an honors student meant you knew about monsters and mythology and that kind of stuff... but I’d always thought that Hiramatsu just knew everything.

“..... Hentai.”

At those sudden sharp words, I burst out laughing before I could even feel any kind of shock.

Why was Hiramatsu calling him that...?

“... Orito-kun’s character... seems like... a hentai.”

“That’s not a monster at all!”

It’s certainly true that this was kind of expected from Orito, but it was seriously off-putting that he had come in a handmade wedding dress...

Well anyways, I was switching with him, so I headed over.

While I was doing that, I had to stop and ask our homeroom teacher one thing as he sat there sighing and clutching his head.

“Sensei.”

“Nnn, wha-?” He yawned and responded at the same time. He didn’t even pay me a single glance.

“Sensei, do you have any children?”

“I haven’t even been married. Are you trying to make fun of me, Aikawa?”

“Nah, I’m not...”

So he seriously didn’t have any children. Geez... what was up with that drunk little girl then?

Was it just a coincidence that they had the same name, and she was just some random little girl?

It didn’t seem like I would be able to get any more useful information out of him like this, so I just scratched my head and went over to Orito.

And as I had been told, his nametag certainly did read “hentai.”

“You’re seriously disgusting, you know that?”

“Ohh, Aikawa. I was waiting. I was getting so hot grilling all these noodles. I just couldn’t take it anymore.”

Rather than saying you were hot, isn’t there a certain human emotion you should be experiencing first?

It was never shameful to show a bit of shame, dammit!

“Well then, let’s switch.”

Orito took off his glasses, and then cheerfully began to strip out of his wedding dress.

... Eh?

“Hm?”

..... Huh?

Orito was now naked from the waist up, and he held out the wedding dress he had just taken off to me.

“Seriously...?”

“Come on, hurry up and put it on. Before a customer gets here.”

“... You’re serious here?”

Switching with Orito. It seemed that this meant we also had to exchange the “hentai” role.

“Kappa! Switch with me! I can just be the kappa!”

I had to escape. I had to escape no matter what!

“Ehh, but I just changed kappa~!”

Well, if he’s already so dedicated to the role, I guess it can’t be helped...

“Mojimoji-kun, you then! Change with me!”

“I don’t wanna... do the ‘a’ in that one.”

Well, if he’s already so dedicated to the role, I guess it can’t be helped...

“Aikawa, come on. Put it on already.”

Is it just me, or were his glasses sparkling?

... This was a nightmare. In the end, I ended up having to put on that wedding dress.

It was just a festival... so something like this wasn't going to kill me.

The other staff taught me how to use the hotplate and make one portion of yakisoba. They also explained to me how much electricity I was allowed to use (as decided by our class representative). Meanwhile, I took off my uniform and put on the apron over my wedding dress, tears overflowing from my eyes.

“Oi, Alkawa. I can't see your nametag.”

Orito took the “Hentai” nametag that was stuck to the wedding dress and attached it to the front of my apron.

You bastard, when you were wearing this dress that nametag definitely hadn't been stuck over the apron!

... Well, I guess I can't do anything but pray that nobody will come.

I stood around nervously and waited, but nobody came. I didn't know if I should be really happy or sad about that.

At that point, Mihara came in. Without saying a word, she took out her cell phone and faced me. I heard the sound of a camera shutter.

She took a damn photo! She better not send that to anybody or I'll sue her ass for using my likeness without permission.

Next, Anderson-kun also came...

“Wow, good going,” he said, impressed. And then he took another photo!

Next came a pretty girl sporting a ponytail and wearing a knitted turtleneck under a cardigan.

She had a certain air about her, almost as if her footsteps alone would be enough to make flowers bloom, even along barren earth.

At the sudden appearance of this pretty girl, the classroom came alive with excitement.

She paid her three-hundred yen at the entrance, and then walked towards me holding her meal ticket.

“Umm, please take your seat first and wait kappa~.”

Almost as if she wanted to block the kappa guy’s words, Sera put her index finger on the kappa’s slightly thinned lips.

“Yes, I know.”

Seeing Sera’s beautiful smile was enough to put a fuzzy grin on the kappa’s face, almost as if he had been washed away by the Sanzu River.⁵

His heart probably skipped a beat because of that finger. Yeah, I understood all too well...

“Ah, everyone. I know this girl.”

Orito adjusted his glasses and spoke in a gentlemanly voice while raising his hand.

⁵ A river with some religious history – basically the Japanese equivalent to the River Styx.

At that point, a shock ran through the classroom.

Nobody could have probably guessed that a ponytailed beauty like this would be someone Orito knew.

They were like a moon and a turtle shell. A whale and a sardine. She was Mt. Everest, and he was a molehill. They were just miles apart.

They didn't go together at all.

"Sera-san."

Orito raised his hand and walked towards Sera. Sera shut her eyes, almost as if she didn't even want to see the air around Orito (let alone his face), and she walked past him while lightly returning his greeting.

The shockwaves that were running through the classroom turned into looks of compassion that pierced through Orito's soul.

The students here probably didn't notice.

They had a genuine monster in their midst right now. Hmm... vampires counted as monsters, right?

"A hentai dressed up as a hentai monster... quite fitting, I have to say. How disgusting."

That was the first thing Sera said upon seeing this zombie wearing a wedding dress.

"It's actually a relief that that's all you had to say."

"Hm... as I thought, Aikawa Ayumu was a fake name, wasn't it?"

Sera spoke coldly as she looked at the nametag on my chest.

“My real name isn’t ‘hentai,’ dammit!”

“Please keep your voice down, Aikawa Hentai-san.”

“Crap, it’s already catching on!”

“S-Sera-san!”

Orito was standing at attention with his heels touching, as if he was a soldier with his superior officer in front of him. He sounded nervous.

What was wrong? It was rare to see Orito nervous like this.

“W-W-Would...”

His eyes from behind his glasses weren’t looking straight at Sera, but rather up at the ceiling. The sound of his voice almost made me think he was singing a song to support the J-League at top speed or something.⁶

And then, he took the plunge.

“Would you go with me and-“ “I don’t want to.”

Orito was shot down, even before he could put all the tiny amount of courage he had mustered up on display.

“L-Let’s walk around the school fes-“ “I refuse.”

⁶ The J-League is Japan’s soccer league. I’m not sure if they’re referring to a specific song here or not.

She was way too strong! What was up with this last boss?! At least let him finish his sentence, dammit!

“Orito, just give up for today.”

“... Okay.”

Sera didn't even pay Orito a glance as he hobbled out of the room with his shoulders drooping, but instead glared at me.

“You're pretty late.”

“I had work to do.”

“... Sorry.”

Her voice came out of her dignified lips and pierced through me like sharp daggers. I felt the heat of her glare and felt I had no choice but to apologize.

She had defied her orders as a vampire ninja, so her commander (named Genkunrou or something) had decided to put her through a test. And that test was... umm... what was it?

“So what happened to that test you were supposed to do?”

“I have to defeat the most terrible of all the monsters, who's said to be sleeping within this land.”

“Ah, so it did become that kind of mission in the end. Wait, something like that is sleeping here?”

“Yes. According to legend, no attacks can hurt it, it's as strong as a demon, but its appearance is that of a young girl.”

When I heard that, I couldn't help but think about Dai-sensei or Haruna, who had defeated that raccoon and gorilla.

... Could it be that her mission was to defeat a masou shoujo?

"So, did you find this thing? If you tell me I can help."

At my question, Sera's ponytail swished from side to side as she shook her head.

"No. This is my own test... more importantly, is Haruna with you?"

So Sera *was* worried about Haruna. Her relationship with Haruna was pretty close to that of two sisters.

"Ahh, Haruna is with Yuu and Tomonori right now."

"Huh... as always, you know nothing at all, don't you?"

"What don't I know...?"

"Nothing... I'm trying to say that she most likely wants you to be there with her."

"No no no no, she's the one who threw me out of the room."

"Even so, you are someone who's good to have around when times are lonely."

"Eh?"

"What? ... What's up with that 'I want to get my arms broken' look on your face?"

"In all my sixteen years of life, I've never once had an 'I want to get my arms broken' look on my face. Anyways, I have to tend to the shop, so I can't go keep Haruna company right now."

“Well, if you have to work, then I suppose there’s no helping it. Can I place one order for yakisoba?”

“Hey hey, weren’t you going to go and look for Haruna?”

“Hellscythe-dono and Mael Strom are both there, are they not? So there’s no real point for me to be there anymore.”

After she had tried to force me to go back there... well, whatever. This could be good practice, so for now I’ll make her one order of yakisoba.

“Here you go.”

I passed Sera the yakisoba I had just finished making, and she took it to the seat near the door that was as far away from me as possible. She sat down and crossed her long legs, while everyone else in the room’s gazes were fixed on her enchanting face.

“Umm... sensei.”

Hiramatsu called out to our homeroom teacher, who was there smoking and fidgeting around restlessly.

“What is it, Hiramatsu?”

He didn’t seem to be in a mood to listen. Stop being so depressed just because someone took your alcohol away from you, dammit.

“Umm... Saitou-san... isn’t coming...”

Saitou-san... who was that again? Oh, right, it was that girl who was supposed to have helped me make the sign. She really didn’t seem that interested in the school festival, so it’s not too surprising that she would skip out from her turn in the café like she had skipped out on the sign-making.

“We’re not too busy, so you can go, Hiramatsu.”

“But.....”

Having a pretty girl like Hiramatsu leave would be bad for business and for my mental state too... but I wanted her to have a chance to enjoy the school festival as well. She’s been a great help to me after all.

“Don’t worry. We’ll handle things down here.”

“Aikawa-kun... thank you... you’re so kind.”

Hiramatsu smiled and gave me a short, deep bow, and then went behind me. There was a pile of cabbage, pork, and other yakisoba ingredients back there, as well as everyone’s schoolbags.

She took her uniform out of her schoolbag and began to exit the room, but before she reached the door a whole group of people came in.

The first person who stepped in looked just like an idol.

She was wearing a very fluffy skirt that was wider than her shoulders, and small wings were attached to her back. Her slender hands were clad in gloves with lace running all the way up to her elbows, and she was holding what almost looked like a baton.

An outfit like that would probably look pretty good on a loli like Haruna.

But, the girl in this outfit was a long-haired girl with proportions that would rival those of Sera’s.

She also had a fierce look on her face, almost as if you could expect her to come slashing at you at any moment.

I recognized this refined face.

“Is that... Saras?”

Sera’s face was stiff, and her chopsticks had stopped in midair.

She was probably pretty shocked. I mean, if anybody saw her superior cosplaying in an outfit like that, they would definitely be shocked, right?

“Seraphim. Do not call me by that name here. Are you an idiot?”

Saras gave Sera a sharp glare, and Sera narrowed her eyes in return.

“Do you not even understand why we have to take up fake names?”

“I humbly apologize... Kirara-san.”

Saras narrowed her eyes as well at the clearly forced way in which Sera had said her name.

Were these two on bad terms with each other?

In the entranceway, those two stood sending off sparks like the lit fuse of a stick of dynamite.

T-They were going to explode! Perhaps Hiramatsu also felt it in the air, as her legs began to shake.

This girl’s name was Sarasvati. She was in the same conservative faction of the vampire ninjas as Sera, but she was actually Seras’s superior. But they were talking to each other as if there was no rank difference between them.

I still had no idea whether they had a good or bad relationship with each other.

Of course, the existence of the vampire ninjas was a secret to normal people, and Saras was living under a false name.

In a similar vein, Tomonori's real name was Mael Strom (which honestly sounded like some water-based attack from a video game).

Saras walked in my direction, and a group of guys followed her one after the other.

It was quite a strange sight to behold.

This group of guys with happi coats⁷ and headbands crowded around, their eyeglasses glinting.

It seemed like the hallway was filled with people all the way to the end, and Hiramatsu was stuck standing at the entrance way, unable to move.

They kind of looked like an old bunch of idol groupies or something... like that group in the gym I had seen earlier.

... Don't tell me... but maybe... did Saras put on a concert or something?

... I admit I would have liked to see that.

She was like a pretty older woman who was wearing a costume that would look pretty good on a small loli. She stood silently in front of the hotplate, looking down at it and crossing her arms.

"What do you want...? If you want yakisoba, go buy a ticket first and wait in your seat."

"I came all the way here to see you, and you talk to me like *that*?"

⁷ Traditional Japanese light coat, usually either blue or brown.

Her sharp glare pierced through me like a blade. Honestly, I was more scared of her glare than Sera's.

"Hey, Kirara. How hard exactly is this test that Sera has to go through? It doesn't look like it's getting anywhere, but is it something she can handle?"

"Hmm... the demon of legend. I challenged this monster around a century ago, but I couldn't do a single thing. What a ferocious beast. But, to put it another way, it's precisely because Seraphim is so strong that she was tasked to deal with a monster like this."

Wait, exactly how old are you? ... Hmm... how strong was Saras exactly...? I couldn't remember it too well, but I at least could say that Saras was way stronger than Sera. She wasn't the leader of her squad for nothing. And this monster was even stronger than that. I suddenly got the feeling that I really had to help Sera out in this test.

"But in any case, I guess you've finally accepted how strong Sera is."

I couldn't keep in a small chuckle, which made Saras's face flush red.

"Y-You damn hentai!"

"You shouldn't be calling anybody a hentai when you're dressed like that!"

This boy in a wedding dress and this pretty girl in a loli costume glared at each other.

Why did Saras always have to be as fiery as this?

"Just grill it already."

The rules were worthless here. In this world, the beautiful people made the rules.

“Yeah yeah. So, what’s with this lot hanging around?”

“You... I’m tempted to think that you’re mocking me.”

And what would happen then? Were you going to impale me with a sword in front of all these people or something? Hah hah hah. As if you could do something like-

Click. Like a ballpoint pen, the tip of her baton opened up and what looked like a sharp stake appeared from the end. It was a vampire using a damn stake as a weapon! Also, was she seriously planning to come at me with that thing in full public view?!

“Are you an idiot?!”

I guarded myself with my spatula and spoke in a panicked voice.

“D-Don’t make fun of our lovely Kirara-tan!”

Shouts of agreement rang out around me. These people were annoying. Just finish your damn noodles and get out of here, ugh.

“Although, this store doesn’t seem to be doing too well, does it?”

Saras gave me a condescending smirk.

“Well, we’re actually doing great business here thanks to you.”

“When you’re as popular as I am, then that’s an obvious result.

What, are you saying that even someone like Seraphim couldn't attract customers? Fufu."

Saras gave a suggestive smile, which prompted Sera to stand up. Saras might have outranked her, but when she was called out by name like that it was impossible for her to just sit there quietly.

"You over there..."

"Y-Yes!"

Hiramatsu couldn't hide her surprise when she was suddenly called on by Sera.

"You said earlier that the girl who had the next shift never came, correct?"

"Y-... Yes..."

"I'll take the next shift."

"What? But..."

"Ah, Hiramatsu. Just let her do it. After all... this could get interesting."

"Sensei..."

"Really, it's fine. Whatever."

This teacher really just didn't care about anything, did he?

"Ohh, so Seraphim has a mind to challenge me?"

Saras beckoned to one of her groupies with her finger, and one person broke from the pack, crawling to her on all fours.

Saras took one of her bewitching legs, wrapped in a high knee sock, and placed it on her follower's back.

When she did that, all her groupies fell to the floor and kowtowed in front of her.

"You want to challenge *me*? Fuhahahaha!"

The corners of Saras's mouth turned slightly upwards and she let out a satisfied laugh.

"Saras-" "Don't call me by that name."

Saras glared at me with angry, wide-open eyes, so I corrected myself while I was piling yakisoba in her plate.

"Kirara-san."

"What is it?"

"These people aren't pledging their loyalty to you or anything... they just want to look at your underwear, you know?"

"Hwah?"

It was like she was trying to say "why" in English, or trying to imitate what Bruce Lee might sound like if he had a question. Either way, Saras looked at me with a doubtful expression.

As I sprinkled dried bonito flakes and green seaweed on her plate, I gestured for her to take a look down. But suddenly, the groupie who had been so intently staring up her skirt turned his face towards the ground.

“It looks to me like everyone has their foreheads plastered to the ground?”

Saras shook her head resignedly. Meanwhile, her groupies looked right up her skirt.

I gestured for her to look down again, but everyone looked right at the floor again, with almost perfectly synched timing.

“Look, I do sympathize with your jealousy of my charisma. However, lying is not good. If you try to hide your lies with another lie, then it begins to affect my trust in you.”

“I see.”

“And really... even if they were looking at my underwear, exactly why should I care?”

“Well... that’s... because it’s embarrassing or something...”

“Ridiculous. Do you really think someone in an outfit like this would get embarrassed at having her underwear seen? Do I look like some flimsy child?”

“Well, show me your underwear then.”

“You hentai! Go die! You should go spill salt water on that electrical outlet and get electrocuted!”

Make up your damn mind. Ugh, this girl was annoying.

“So, in other words, you’re just trying to act tough-“

Saras put her index finger softly on my lips. It was the same thing I had seen Sera do time and time again.

“Are you really so narrow-minded that you can’t forgive one girl trying to act tough?”

Oh geez... when she said it like that to me, I really couldn’t say anything in response.

At some point, Sera had finished changing and walked over to us. Her skirt was a bit too small, and it had become a very short miniskirt. Her suspenders hung tight from her shoulders, and her blouse was pushed up by her two bountiful mounds.

I saw a ponytailed Hanako-san standing right in front of me.

Crap. She was really sexy. All we had done was put a “Hanako-san of the Toilet” outfit on someone with the physique of a model, but why was it so sexy?

Saras’s groupies also looked up at Sera in blank amazement.

These groupies were sprinkled all around Saras like flower petals, but Sera treated them as if they were nothing but a piece of carpet as she stepped on them to walk towards Saras.

Was she supposed to be Raoh’s horse or something?!⁸

There were footprints appearing in their happi coats, but this lot was satisfied. It was, after all, worth it for the other blessing they were receiving.

“Ugh! I’m not an M. I’m the Lovely Kirara-tan’s-“

“I’ll be the one who decides if you’re S or M. And you are just a little M pig.”

⁸ Reference to Fist of the North Star.

“Yes. I’m a little M pig.”

Before I knew it, after their happi coats had become stained completely black by Sera’s footprints, this crowd of groupies had fallen under Sera’s control.

“Well well, Seraphim. Looks like you’ve got some fight left in you.”

“Those who call themselves vampire ninjas must fight without fear no matter what enemy appears before them. I’m just obeying the law.”

“It’s strange to hear someone who once turned her back on the law saying that. Well, fine. This should be amusing enough.”

“Well then... whoever attracts the most customers wins.”

“Just remember that you’ve never won against me.”

Saras let out a loud laugh and gallantly took the yakisoba from me.

“Let’s start the match at six then.”

“Agreed. I’ll be taking my yakisoba with me now.”

“Pay first.”

At my words, Saras took out three hundred yen. But I didn’t take her money and just pointed towards the door.

“The register is that way.”

Saras gave me a *hmph* and walked out of the classroom, taking her groupies with her.



We don't allow takeout, you know...

Sera turned to look at me, her eyes showing a ferocity that told me she was ready for battle.

"Hentai-dono, do you have any bright ideas?"

"Why are you asking me?"

"I have plenty of confidence and pride in my own abilities. But... I cannot win against Saras on my own."

"Why? You were stealing her groupies from her just now, weren't you?"

"Never... I've never been able to beat her."

Sera didn't seem frustrated. Rather, her jade-colored eyes were filled with the drive to win.

I was at a loss. What advice should I give her? And would my advice really be okay?

But then, a light bulb flashed atop my head.

"Alright, Sera."

"What is it? You look like you just thought of something."

She smiled at me, a brilliant smile I rarely saw. I gave her a serious look in return and told her my plan.

"... Go look for Orito."

At that point, Sera went from a fully blooming smile right back to her usual expression, as if she was looking at something dirty.

Chapter 3: Part 2

“Hmm... I see.”

A spiky-haired guy stood in front of me, nodding while I explained my plan to him.

“Ayumu... mm, no, sorry. This do-hentai -dono told me to ask you for further instructions.”

Not only did she correct herself there, but I was now a dreadnaught-class hentai...¹

“... Sera-san. I’m sorry, but you picked the wrong opponent this time.”

“Orito, do you know much about Sara-... I mean, about Hoshikawa Kirara?”

“Well, she’s pretty famous in the net idol world. She’s a top ranker there. I mean, when you hear her tell you that looking at her underwear is okay in that style of hers, don’t you want to be her fan too? She’s also a good singer, she wears the outfits you send her, but she always has that strict personality of hers. That’s another secret to getting popular.”

“hmm, so you’re one of her fans too, aren’t you?”

“I’m... no no, I’m not.”

Orito waved his hands back and forth.

“Why? I would have thought that a dirty lowlife like you would be just what that girl’s looking for.”

¹ The prefix “do” is generally used in very slangy circles to mean “very.” So “do-hentai” means “huge hentai” or something like that. Interestingly enough, “do” itself is short for “dreadnaught class.” I actually didn’t know this before reading this, and I had to Google search it to confirm.

“That’s... well, it happened last May. I was on a train, and I realized that I was riding in the same car as Hoshikawa. I also saw that Hoshikawa was being felt up by some salaryman.”

It was a rule that vampire ninjas were not allowed to kill humans. So I doubt that Saras actually killed the guy... but I wondered how she had dealt with it.

“I thought that this could be my big chance! I mean, I thought that if I saved her here, maybe this would lead to love blooming between the two of us! Right?”

“No, wrong.”

“Yes, that’s wrong.”

“Anyways, that’s why I went up to her. The minute I reached out to grab that man’s hand, Hoshikawa turned and looked at me...”

“Did she mistake you for the molester?”

-

“‘Is that all you got? You’re complete crap at this,’ she said to me.”

-

Orito wiped away the tears that had formed inside his glasses at this painful memory.

“Wow... harsh.”

“Yeah. And that salaryman and I just stood there in shock. We didn’t even need to hold onto the train straps.”

He had suffered so much psychological damage that he couldn't even move anymore. Well, I guess I can't really blame him here.

"Let's return to the topic at hand. How do I win?"

"That's simple. Sera-san just has to play this game on equal terms with her."

"What do you mean?"

"Right now, if you say Net Idol 'Lovely Kirara,' anybody will know you're talking about an angelic star of the Net Idol world."

"I didn't know though."

"Which means there are cracks in her defense. Well, just leave it to me."

Have I ever left anything to Orito before now? ... I don't think I ever have.

After that, Orito took out a single-lens reflex camera and took three photos of Sera. Namely, one of her chest, one of her butt, and one of her face.

After he had taken the last photo, for some reason Sera punched me hard.

"What should I do?"

"Just keep on working here like normal."

Orito flashed us his pearly whites, and Sera for some reason punched me hard again.

Could you spare me the outbursts of anger, please?

Chapter 3: Part 3

When six rolled around on the clock, our monster café began to liven up quite a bit.

Five portions of yakisoba were sizzling on the hotplate as guys with glasses welled into the classroom one after the other.

Were these customers Saras had called over, or ones that had come with Sera in mind?

It was clearly the latter.

After all, everyone was gathered around this beauty dressed up as Hanako-san of the Toilet, trying to snap a cell-phone photo of her.

They all looked like they could be fans of Saras. But they had all come looking for Sera.

“What in the world... this is just...”

I really wish people could imagine what it was like being here in a wedding dress and being forced to just keep grilling yakisoba.

“Aikawa! The cabbage is running low kappa!”

The kappa and Mojimoji-kun were next to me, also grilling five portions of yakisoba apiece and raising a fuss.

“I’ll go buy some! Do the ‘y’ in that one!”

I get the feeling that if someone went shopping in a Mojimoji-kun outfit they might get arrested... and it’s not like it’s terrible if we sold out.

But I was so busy that I didn't even have enough time to think about stuff like that.

We had run out of seats, so all the guys were standing in line and eating. We had turned into a stand-and-eat soba shop.

Sera was the one handing out the yakisoba, and as she waited for my next batch to finish she gave Orito a dubious look.

"Exactly what did you do?"

"Quite simple. I just spread a rumor."

Orito continued explaining with a fully fledged smile even as he slurped up his yakisoba.

... What a horribly annoying face he had. Hey asshole, stop eating and help out a bit, won't you?

"The biggest advantage Sera has is her sexy figure. So I just made a part of that figure public, and also made it known that if you wanted a better look, this was the only chance you had. Instead of having the same pizza you've always had, isn't it more enticing to have high-class sushi for the first time? It's something like that. Well, it also helped that I posted a few comments to fan the flames a bit."

I see. If you wanted to see the full picture, you had to come. Once you came, you would be swept away by how unexpectedly beautiful she was, and the rumors would spread even more. And really, when you were told that this was the only chance to see that... even I would've wanted to come.

Sera would seriously put professional models to shame, after all.

It also helped that there were a lot of people around who had come looking for idols, so they would be especially sensitive to that kind of information.

Wha-?! Sera-san! Don't punch me!

I heard a commotion before the crowd split into two, and in came Saras with a fierce look on her face, still wearing her frilly skirt.

"What the hell did you do?!"

She suddenly gripped Sera by the collar, causing an uproar in the monster café.

"What do you mean?"

At Sera's glare, Saras ground her inner teeth.

"Hey hey, don't fight in here."

I left the yakisoba alone and put myself in between the two of them. Orito took up my place, mixing the yakisoba with the spatula for me.

"I haven't the faintest idea what you could be so angry about."

"Invading and messing up someone's territory like that..."

She was probably getting completely worked up over this silly online thing.

"Well, we just thought we would even the playing field a bit."

I defended Sera, which caused Saras's eyes to grow sharp.

"I can't stand people who make a fuss just because someone has big breasts!"

I agreed with her there, but...

“Are your breasts so small that you would lose to someone based on that alone? My my, I have to say I’m disappointed.”

“That’s it...”

I raised both my hands to stop these two girls from getting closer.

“Hey hey, calm down. You were the one who came looking for a battle in the first place, weren’t you? And you already were popular, and had a lot of fans come to the school festival. If you won a landslide victory in a popularity contest under those conditions, you wouldn’t really be happy about it either, right? Also, sure, there were a lot of people snapping photos of Sera, but I’m sure there are people here who came here for you too. This time Sera-“

“What did you say?! Try saying it one more time!”

“From where?! That speech was already at four lines!”

“You two just don’t understand, do you? About the gravity of what Seraphim has done...”

“Gravity? She was just posted on the internet... did something happen because of that?”

“Yes. Right now, Seraphim has jumped to the top of the rankings. This is probably only temporary, but the situation has grown grave indeed.”

“I can’t follow you at all.”

“Well, it’s all because the person who was on the top of the net idol rankings before Seraphim showed up was-“

“Orito, who was number one in the net idol rankings?”

“Umm... a really really cute girl named Ayaka-san.”

“Ayaka... don’t tell me...”

Sera gulped.

“Yes, our master. Seraphim. You just picked a fight with Ayaka-sama and defeated her thoroughly.”

“Your master...?”

“Yes. Our chieftain’s... daughter.”

“She was a net idol...”

In other words, this was like a normal company employee shaming the company president’s daughter. And if that’s the case, this certainly was a dangerous situation. Even apart from all that, Sera had once committed a taboo as a vampire ninja.

“Even someone as gentle and famous as I am can feel the rage building over this.”

I couldn’t suppress a feeling of discomfort at what she had said.

A gentle person wouldn’t try to stick someone with a stake or grip someone by the collar before starting to talk, would she?

Sera’s face had turned pale. I really didn’t see how this situation was worth worrying so much over.

But for now, I really had to quell this other girl’s anger...

“W-Well... I personally think that Saras is prettier...”

Sera would probably be able to read the situation and figure out what I was trying to do.

“Idiot! Don’t say something like that straight to my face!”

She got shy when someone praised her?!

“I... what should I do...?”

“Hey, you. Your name was... Aikawa ‘Hentai’ Ayumu, was it?”

She just slipped that right into the middle like I was some K1 fighter¹ or something!

“Are you willing to risk your life for Seraphim?”

“... If you really think someone like me can make a difference, I’d risk my life at a moment’s notice.”

“Hm. Well then, Seraphim. Hurry up and embrace this man.”

At that point, it was as if all the negative feelings Sera had built up in her were being scraped out.

“I don’t want to! I’d rather fall into a septic tank.”

“Hentai Ayumu. Feel free to take her by force. Embrace her. Show the world exactly what the word ‘hentai’ means!”

¹ A kickboxing platform and martial arts brand.

Even if you tell me that...

Uwah! Sera's glare is fierce! I could've sworn the air around Sera was shaking, like there were flames surrounding her.

Sometimes I mistook Sera for an Asura demon or something, but today there was no mistaking it.

It was an Asura! There was an Asura right here!

"I can't! I just don't have the courage!"

"Do it quickly. Don't blame me if it's too late."

"Sera--"

Sera placed her pale, long index finger on my lips.

"I understand the situation. Just hurry up. And then, hurry up and let me chop you to bits."

Her jade-colored eyes were now dyed red. Wait, why was she preparing for battle...?

I was way too afraid to do this facing her, so I went behind her and wrapped my arms around her like the seatbelt in a roller coaster.

Sera grabbed onto my arms, holding them so that I wouldn't be able to get them too close to her body.

"So, exactly what is the point of this?"

Her voice scared me.

“She has a boyfriend?!”

One of the groupies shouted that out.

Suddenly, all the buzz that had been in the air seemed to flow out the room.

I see. It was always assumed that an idol didn't have a boyfriend. When you were attracted to a girl, you might think that it's obvious such a cute girl would have a boyfriend, but witnessing it in person still made your heart throb in pain. I could definitely sympathize with that.

“What's so special about that hentai?” “Hmph, he's just a hentai too.” “Even though he's a hentai...” “That hentai is so annoying...”

But... why was everyone staring at me?

It was as if... this was completely my fault. Ugh, harsh. The mood in this room was so harsh! And what's more, Sera was going to chop me to pieces after this, you know? I'll have to make sure I never hug her again.

But then, a voice echoed through the room, cutting right through that uneasy atmosphere.

“Aikawa Aikawa Aikawa! Not good not good!”

I was called repeatedly, almost like Haruna would have done, and the sea of guys parted to the side, allowing a single girl through.

It was a short-haired girl wearing a sailor's uniform. I recognized her as Tomonori, even though she had been wearing a swimsuit and selling CDs just a bit ago.

What the hell did she want with us when we were so busy? Geez.

“Aikawa listen to me! W-What should I do?!”

She came over to me, looking completely confused. She even seemed to have mistaken the yakisoba we had just grilled for water, picking up some and sending it down her throat. She started to cough.

Was this girl a complete idiot?

“A... Aikawa?”

Tomonori seemed shocked when she saw that Sera and I were holding onto each other.

Seeing that, Sera broke one of my fingers.

Just because I can't feel any pain doesn't mean you can just show no mercy whatsoever, dammit.

“A-As I thought... Seraphim and Aikawa...”

“Tomonori. It's not what you think.”

Sera let out a deep sigh. She whispered something to Tomonori, and Tomonori seemed relieved.

“Oh... thank goodness. I completely thought... a-anyways! What should I do?!”

“Tomonori, what happened to the swimsuit?”

“I'm wearing it under my shirt! But more importantly! What should I do?!”

Tomonori rolled up her skirt. At that moment, the sounds of camera flashes echoed through the room.

“Uwah! Don’t take photos! Ugh... it sure is lively around here, isn’t it? W-Wait, no, this isn’t the time! What should I do, Aikawa?!”

“How many times are you going to ask me that-”

I got up to that point with irritation in my voice when I suddenly caught my breath.

Don’t tell me... had something happened to Haruna?

“Where’s Haruna?”

“Master? Master was putting ‘50% Off’ stickers onto the CDs. Why do you ask?”

Huh? So this had nothing to do with Haruna?

“So what do you want then? Even an idiot like you can probably tell, but we’re really busy right now.”

“I’m not an idiot! M-More importantly, take a look at this!”

“Hm?”

Tomonori passed me a single letter.

The sender was anonymous, but “Yoshida Yuki-sama” was written skillfully on it, and the handwriting made me think it was definitely written by a guy.

What was this? Don’t tell me... a love letter for Tomonori?

It wasn’t impossible. Some guys might definitely be attracted to Tomonori’s energetic side.

"I just don't know... what should I do? I just don't know..."

Well, it's not like I knew either.

To succinctly summarize what was in the letter, it came down to "I'll be waiting for you under the tree by the pool." It seemed like this was a serious love letter. The guy had developed feelings for Tomonori since a while ago, and probably was using the festive atmosphere of the school festival to try his hand at a confession.

... Just great.

"Just don't go. I've always personally ignored things like this."

I agreed with Sera. It wasn't a big deal to just leave this stuff alone.

"B-But, if this came from a student, school life is gonna get really awkward from now on! I'll be so worried about it that I won't even be able to pay attention in class!"

Tomonori held onto her head with both hands and shook her head bashfully.

"Why did you come here to ask Aikawa? Go ask Mihara or something."

Orito sighed even as he snapped photos up Tomonori's skirt.

"I'm gonna punch you in the face. Also, Kanami told me that I should ask Aikawa."

That girl just pushed something troublesome onto me, didn't she...?

"Alright, I got it. I'll go with you later..."

"No, please just go with me noooow~~."

“Why?!”

“He might’ve been waiting there forever. Wouldn’t that be bad?”

The most infuriating thing was that to me, it really wasn’t that bad.

“Well, there’s no other choice then. Aikawa, I’ll switch with you, so go ahead.”

Orito had gotten quite good at making the yakisoba. It was almost as if he was born to do this.

“O-Orito! I’m in your debt!”

Tomonori said that and offered Orito a handshake.

“It’s a single-panties debt then. In other words, give me your panties.”

“Eh? This is a swimsuit though.”

As I listened to this rather mismatched conversation, perhaps it was because the glares around me were getting even sharper, but I began to think that maybe it wasn’t a terrible idea to go with Tomonori.

“Well, anyways, Tomonori. At least let me change.”

I went to grab my uniform from my bag, but...

“Quick quick!”

Tomonori pulled me by the hand. Ugh, geez! Maybe I should just go, get this over with, and then get back as fast as possible.

I tossed my most important items in my blazer and put it on, and then walked out of the classroom with Tomonori.

“I’m off then.”

“When you return... let’s continue with this.”

Continue with what?! Continuing with this mess where I’m hugging Sera... this is definitely going to end up with me getting chopped into bits, isn’t it?!

The minute we exited into the hallway...

“Ah, it’s the man himself.” “The man himself has come!” “So he *is* a hentai. As expected.”

I had abuse thrown at me from all directions.

“Seriously, just let me go back and change! For God’s sake!”

But Tomonori ignored my tantrum and just continued to pull me forwards.

Chapter 3: Part 4

We had arrived at the tree next to the pool.

This was a spot that was rumored to be the best place on the school campus for making confessions.

The pool area was surrounded by the old school building and a wire fence, and in this season this place was always quiet and empty.

The curtain of night was already falling, leaving this place dimly lit by the lights from the old school building.

“Nobody’s here. Maybe it was just a joke.”

Tomonori drooped her shoulders, seeming disappointed. I guess she really was hoping for something to happen.

“Well, that’s too bad. Where exactly did you get that letter from anyways?”

“Someone knocked on our clubroom’s door, and when I opened it this letter was there.”

“You trusted something like *that* and came all the way here? What would you do if someone strange showed up?”

“It’s fine! There’s two of us here!”

“Well, that’s true.”

I could imagine an idiot like Tomonori not thinking and just going off somewhere with some strange guy, but with two of us here there was no worry of that.

“One plus one just makes two. But... if it’s me and Aikawa, it’s different! We don’t add up! We multiply! We can take down any enemy we meet!”

Tomonori gave me a thumbs up with a big smile on her face. Her white teeth were dazzling.

“... Eh?”

Enemy? It seemed that in Tomonori’s head, there was a big chart with the equation ‘strange person = scary enemy’ written on it. Also, did this girl really do all the math out before talking? Thinking that multiplying was always bigger than adding was enough to already prove she was a prototypical idiot.

“Tomonori, Tomonori!”

“Oh? What what?”

Tomonori blinked a few times, her smile still on her face. I did feel a bit bad about being such a killjoy when she was having so much fun... but I would tell it to her straight. I had to tell it to her straight.

“Tomonori, that’s less.”

“Huh?”

“One times one is less. One plus one is more.”

“Oh no!” Tomonori shouted while clutching her head in both hands.

But soon, the sparkle returned to her eyes.

“Ah! Then let’s go for two! Two plus two just makes four-“

“That’s the same! That’s exactly the same! Pick a bigger number.”

“O-Okay! Ah, ummmmmm... alright!”

Tomonori took a deep breath and tried again.

“A hundred plus a hundred just makes a thousand-“

“Stooooop!! Seriously, you can’t add numbers with three digits?”

“A-Are you calling me an idiot?!”

“I’m not. I’m calling you a moron.”

“How is that different?!”

Tomonori raised both her hands and screamed out like a monkey, but she soon seemed to lose interest and once again put on a bright smile.

“But I don’t think it was just a joke. Something’s gotta be around here...”

Tomonori looked all around the area.

I also looked around. But I couldn’t really see anything. All I could see was red grass.

Red grass? The grass under the tree of legend was dyed red.

I went over to double check, and then with an “ahhh,” finally remembered what this was.

“What’s up?”

Tomonori was going round and round the tree while she called out to me.

“Well, umm... I met a weird guy over here earlier.”

Yes. This grass was dyed red by the blood that guy had spit out. That guy who had a doctor telling him to not do anything.

“I don’t think Aikawa should be calling anybody weird.”

It seemed that Tomonori was making fun of me, but I couldn’t get mad at her when she gave me that toothy smile of hers. I just gave her a toothy smile back.

“And then, well... he gave me this ring...”

From my blazer pocket, I took out the ring I had bought for a hundred yen back then and was about to show it to Tomonori when she suddenly poked her head out from behind the tree and beckoned to me.

“Aikawa! Aikawa! Take a look at this!”

It seemed like she had found something. I stepped on the red grass and the dry leaves which had fallen from this tree of legend and headed around to Tomonori’s location.

It was on the backside of the tree, somewhere where you would never think to look during your school life. There was something strange there.

Don’t ever push this!

There was a sticker with that written on it stuck there, along with a red button.

What kind of tree came with this kind of button?

“Okay... I’m gonna push it!”

Tomonori touched the round red button with a trembling finger.

“Wait, it says not to push it though. It even says ‘ever.’”

However you spun this, this had to be a prank. Or a trap or something. I couldn’t imagine anything good coming out of this.

On the other hand, Tomonori was clearly itching to push that button.

“I think here, I have to...”

She began to hop a bit around like a boxer, and I thought she was about to send a boxing jab right into the button when...

“Nah, actually...”

Tomonori flicked the tip of her nose with her thumb and went into a kung fu posture.

“Agh! Dammit! Aikawa! How should I push this button?!”

It seemed that Tomonori was already dead set on pushing the button. She was just searching for the right way to do it.

“What if you just triple click it or something?”

This was all pretty irritating, so I just threw her back the first thing I thought of while letting out a sigh. This was probably just a prank, after all.

“Ah, that ultimate button-pressing move which selects the entire paragraph in one go?! Got it!”¹

Tomonori immediately put her finger nervously on the red button. *Click click click*. She pushed the button quickly in succession three times... and nothing happened.

The only thing we could hear was the sound of the wind rustling the leaves on the tree.

“... Awww.”

Tomonori drooped her shoulders in disappointment, but then a wash basin fell right on her head. So it really was a trap?

The wash basin seemed to have hit her in a bad place, because Tomonori moaned with tears in her eyes as she teetered back and forth.

At that point... a second wash basin fell down. This also seemed to have hit her in a bad place, because Tomonori suddenly fell to the ground.

“Aikawa...” She called out to me for help, reaching a hand towards me.

And seeing her like that... I burst out laughing.

“That’s so mean... Aikawa.”

Tomonori was blushing, perhaps embarrassed at having herself seen in such a foolish state. I reached out towards her to help her get back to her feat.

And then came the third wash basin. This also landed a clean hit on Tomonori’s head. And it also seemed to have hit her in a bad place.

¹ Yes, this is apparently what a triple click does. I even looked it up. You learn something new every day.

She hit the button three times and three wash basins came falling down... what a mathematically faithful little button this was.

“Tomonori? Hey, Tomonori?”

I shook her by the shoulders, but I didn’t get a response. Just in case, I checked her pulse, but she was still alive. It seemed she had just fallen unconscious.

To think there were really people in this world who could get knocked unconscious by wash basins... geez, what a strange prank this was. I softly smacked Tomonori on the cheeks in an attempt to wake her back up.

When I did that, Tomonori’s eyes suddenly opened. But she hadn’t regained consciousness.

What looked like a spirit of some kind began to flow out of Tomonori’s body, and I couldn’t keep my face from twitching in annoyance. There was an absurdly annoying spirit aka ‘masou weapon’ possessing Tomonori’s body. And it would activate whenever Tomonori lost consciousness.

Those activation conditions had certainly been fulfilled by the wash basins just now.

“Abnormality detected in host body. Removing all restrictions on weapons.”

That spirit had quite a strange form. The right half of it looked like a naked man. A well-built, muscular man with a perfectly sculpted figure. However, the left half looked like flames which waved back and forth like smoke trails.

“Offspring of god and dragon, gather here in both my hands.”

Tomonori’s cute little lips moved. But her usual energetic tone of voice now sounded cold and indifferent.

"First chant confirmed. Technique activated."

The masou weapon spoke in response to Tomonori's words. This was bad. This was really bad.

Just as the word "weapon" would imply, this spirit thing was completely ferocious. I had to stop Tomonori before she finished her chant.

"Tomonori! Tomonori!"

I called out to her repeatedly and shook her body.

"Listen to the voice of your king and gather here in both my hands!" **"Second chant confirmed. Preparations for whirlwind complete."**

The air around us took on a tinge of green and gathered around Tomonori.

Like a bunch of fireflies in the dark, the glowing wind began to whirl around with Tomonori at its center.

"Explode. Hellion Stream." **"Final chant confirmed. Whirlwind released."**

The green wind that had gathered around Tomonori explosively expanded.

The wind went wild, and it was almost as if thousands of whips were beating into our surroundings.

Like the whirlwind weasels of Japanese mythology, the green wind shaved the bark off the big tree, cut through the grass, left scratches in the wall, and tore through the wire fence.

I was sent flying along with the wash basins, and made violent impact with the fence around the pool.

But the wind had cut up the fence pretty badly, and my body broke through it and rolled along the side of the pool.

How... could I stop this?

That green wind was indiscriminately destroying everything around it. It had already gouged out parts of the wall, and the fence was almost completely knocked down. It wasn't easy to even get close to her with this wind blowing. I hung my body low and began to crawl along the poolside. I must say, it's a pretty rare experience to be able to crawl around like this in a wedding dress.

I managed to crawl my way up to the spot where I was before I was knocked away, but what should I do now? If I didn't stop her soon, I would just be sent flying again. I had to do something.

I really didn't have much time to think about this problem... but that's when I heard a voice.

"Do you want to know how to stop her?"

It was a man's voice. A man's voice was whispering to me from behind.

I turned around, but only saw my shadow behind me.

"Who's that? No, it doesn't matter. Please, please tell me how to stop this."

"Oh my, so you'll believe anything a shady man tells you? Quite adaptable, you are."

"I'll decide whether I believe you or not after I hear what you have to say."

I looked around to try to find where the voice was coming from, but I didn't have any luck. It wasn't as if the voice was in my head or anything... it felt like it was always behind me. Who the hell was this?

"You have an item you can use to stop her. Take that item and give it to that cute... *cough!*"

I heard a violent cough, and felt something wet getting sprayed over my back.

"Ugh! My doctor ordered me to stop calling little girls cute..."

This was that guy, wasn't it? Which meant...

I took out the ring with the small jewel I had bought from him at this place a little bit ago.

"Now that I think about it, you said it back when you gave me this ring, right? That the time to use it would come..."

"W-Well now... what in the world could you be talking about...?"

"This is the first time I've realized how annoying it is when someone gets found out but still decides to play dumb..."

"Aikawa Ayumu-kun, you would make a fine psychic or detective. To think you could figure out who someone is by his voice alone even though you've only met him once..."

No, it's just that you're special. You're the only person in the world with a doctor this crazy.

"Let's get back on topic. What should I do?"

“That ring there was made to put her powers under control. All you have to do is to put it on her.”

“I see. There’s also just one other thing I really, really want to ask you...”

“Hm?”

“How did you know it was going to turn out like this? Are you a fortune teller or something?”

“Ahh... well, that’s simple. This trap was- *cough!* Ugh! My doctor ordered me not to give spoilers...”

Alright, it’s time to ignore this weird guy and finish this thing.

I gripped the ring tight and leapt towards Tomonori. Call me a hentai if you want. But I leapt right at her, trying to cover her body with mine.

Almost as if it had physical form, the half-transparent man’s right fist came at me in a punch. The green wind tore through my body.

I felt the unpleasant sensation of pieces of my arm being torn off, but even then I continued to fly towards the girl lying stretched out by the foot of the tree.

I was almost there, but then was blown back to my original position. I had accomplished nothing but still had taken damage. I found myself lying on my face by the poolside, waiting for an opening.

What should I do? Right then, almost as if he could read my mind...

“Want my help?”

I heard the man behind me again, and it almost sounded like he was mocking me.

It was as if he didn't think I could handle this myself, and that just annoyed me to no end.

But the green wind was ripping through the wall, and the hole in that wall was getting bigger. The tree of legend was also pretty close to collapsing. If I didn't hurry the wall would break down, and fixing that would be troublesome. More than anything else... if someone else happened to come by this place, their lives would be at risk. Although, I was okay because I was a zombie.

"Please help then." The minute I said that, I was sucked into my shadow. I was completely swallowed, almost as if a big hole had just opened up there.

The next moment... for some reason, I felt myself trapped right under Tomonori.

It seemed that I had just jumped from shadow to shadow. Was this the same power the King of the Night had possessed? That guy could move with his mist, and this guy through shadows. Exactly who the hell was this person?

Feeling the warmth of Tomonori's body on my back, I slipped the ring on her finger... I wasn't really planning on paying attention to this, but that finger was her left hand's ring finger.

Just from that, the wind stopped.

But the masou weapon still seemed alive and well, and just stayed there, attached to Tomonori's body like a caterpillar.

I kept a wary eye on this man with only half a body and called out to Tomonori.

"Tomonori. Tomonori..."

I pinched her cheek, held her nose, but even so her consciousness didn't return.

“Munyah munyah... one sheep...”

“She’s already asleep! She’s counting damn sheep!”

“Agh! This retort... is that Aikawa?!”

“Oh, looks like you finally woke up.”

“I was... the wash basins... Uwaaahh! W-What is this thing... the grim reaper or something?!”

Tomonori stood up and began to run, shocked at the strange appearance of the masou weapon. She went round and round the tree, but the masou weapon followed her the entire way, keeping exactly the same distance behind her.

“Calm down. That thing is... kind of like your guardian spirit.”

“My...”

Wave, wave. As Tomonori moved her hand back and forth, the half-transparent man matched her exactly with his right arm. It seemed that Tomonori was in control.

“I have a Star Platinum now...”²

“Hey! That’s not right at all! ... That thing... is your own power.”

“... Should I give him a name?”

“Well, why not? I guess having a name is always better.”

² A reference to Jojo’s Bizarre Adventure.

“I guess... I have to give it a name from Western music, right?”

“I don’t think that’s an actual rule...”

“Okay. Vinaigrette, then.”

“She named this thing after French dressing!”

Without moving her own body, Tomonori moved Vinaigrette’s right arm.

“Don’t underestimate the power of French dressing!”

Was that her idea of a snappy comeback or something? Vinaigrette punched me with his transparent right arm.

... That one attack was enough to easily pierce through my stomach. A fist-sized hole formed there.

“Uwah! Sorry Aikawa! I didn’t know it was that strong!”

“Ah, don’t worry about it. The wedding dress just got a bit dirty. No big deal.”

I used both my hands to block the blood from gushing out of the wound.

I’m so happy it’s getting to night time. At night, even a wound like this would heal pretty quickly.

“I’ll try not to use this too much from now on! Sorry! Are you alright?”

“No worries. That thing was something that had been inside of you... but do you think you can send it back where it belongs?”

“I-I’ll try.”

Tomonori shut her eyes, and her body sucked the masou weapon back into itself like a vacuum cleaner. Seeing that, I breathed a sigh of relief.

“So, about that ring you have on.”

“A-Aikawa... this ring...”

Tomonori looked at the ring on her ring finger, and flushed bright red.

“Never take it off, okay? This ring is what lets you-“

Control Vinaigrette. Is what I wanted to say, but...

“I-I-I-IT’S A MARRIAGE RING!”

This situation was getting more and more awkward.

“And Aikawa’s in a wedding dress too... I think I get what’s going on! Aikawa must’ve called me here... that’s why you couldn’t hand me the letter, right? If I saw your face you’d totally be found out.”

What the hell was she trying to say? It almost sounded like she was starting to think that I had called her here to participate in something like a wedding ceremony or something.

Stop blushing. You’ll make me blush too... crap. I’m blushing too now, aren’t I? If I blush, this misunderstanding is just going to spiral out of control.

“A-Aikawa... I...”

Tomonori took off the ring momentarily and put it on her right ring finger. And then, with determination in her eyes and a voice without any regret...

“Sorry. I’m happy you asked, but this is a bit strange when I’m still in high school... umm... but, I mean, I’m definitely going to be Aikawa’s wife, but... no, that’s not it...”

“Tomonori...”

“D-Don’t say anything more! Isn’t this already embarrassing enough?!”

Tomonori blocked me from explaining the situation and covered her face with both her hands, shaking her head with embarrassment.

“No, seriously, Tomonori...”

We weren’t getting anywhere here. I put my hand on Tomonori’s shoulder to try to calm her down.

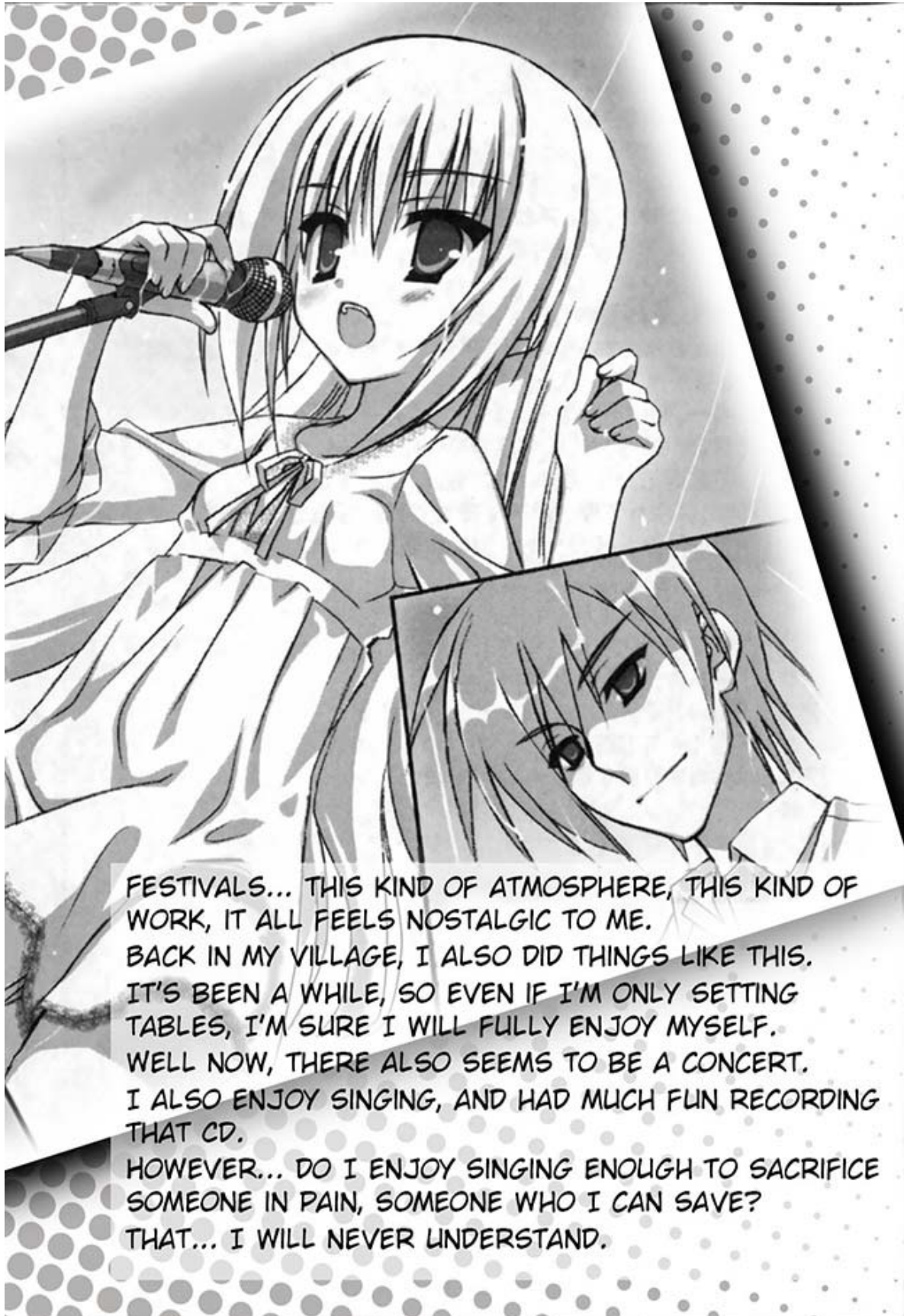
“Aikawa! It’s still too early to kiss! It’s still too earlyyyyyyy~~~!!!”

Tomonori flapped her arms around and sent me flying.

She had just sealed Vinaigrette back inside her, but she had used his powers again. I flew clear over the broken fence... and fell right into the pool.

END CHAPTER 3





FESTIVALS... THIS KIND OF ATMOSPHERE, THIS KIND OF
WORK, IT ALL FEELS NOSTALGIC TO ME.
BACK IN MY VILLAGE, I ALSO DID THINGS LIKE THIS.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, SO EVEN IF I'M ONLY SETTING
TABLES, I'M SURE I WILL FULLY ENJOY MYSELF.
WELL NOW, THERE ALSO SEEMS TO BE A CONCERT.
I ALSO ENJOY SINGING, AND HAD MUCH FUN RECORDING
THAT CD.
HOWEVER... DO I ENJOY SINGING ENOUGH TO SACRIFICE
SOMEONE IN PAIN, SOMEONE WHO I CAN SAVE?
THAT... I WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND.

Chapter 4: Part 1

The minute I got back to the classroom and Orito saw the wedding dress I was wearing in shambles...

“Now nobody can be a hentai except for you.”

He spat that out for all to hear, thus cementing my reputation as a well-known local hentai.

I told everyone that I got like this because I fell down the stairs and then managed to knock over a bucket of water at the end of it all. Everyone believed me probably because it was known I had a pretty weak body and was always collapsing everywhere.

Although, in reality, that was because the sun was too bright.

However, it's not like they could allow me to keep working in a blood-stained, tattered wedding dress, so I once again found myself walking around the school alone.

If you ask me though, a blood-stained bride (male version) seemed extremely monster-like, so it's not like I'd be out of place if I stayed...

Anyways... Sera also seemed to have decided to work there as Hanako-san for the time being.

She said something about always wanting to work at a café like that. Orito also stayed behind, saying something about wanting to be where Sera was...

Tomonori said she was going with Mihara, Hiramatsu, and Anderson-kun to see the Drama Club's play in the multi-purpose auditorium, so I was just wandering around by myself.

What was Haruna doing? Was she still trying to sell those CDs?

I decided to go see how she was doing, and began to head towards the old school building, when...

I met that sake-drinking little girl again. And she was holding in one hand what looked like the same bottle of sake that had been confiscated before.

The festival booth she was at should've been pretty popular amongst the students, but right now she was the only person there. Did everyone else already tire themselves out or something?

This booth was the "Bring Down the Vice Principal!" booth. There was a panel painted with what looked like a demon king with his head portion gouged away, and from that panel the vice principal's head was sticking out.

For a hundred yen, you could throw a water balloon at him. It was that kind of life-or-death setup.

Because nobody would probably play if the vice principal could see who they were, he was wearing a blindfold with cute little eyes painted over it.

"Come on! Bring it on! Is that all you've got- gyah!"

Water balloons crashed against the panel one after the other. The little girl, cute as a small animal, continued to toss the water balloons as she gulped down her sake from the bottle.

"You! How much damn money have you spent on this thing?!"

I couldn't help but call out to her.

“She gave us ten thousand yen.”

The Japanese language teacher told me that with a smile.

“That’s way too much! Also, she’s drinking! Pay attention, dammit!”

I couldn’t help but talk back to the Japanese language teacher.

“Huh? Aikawa-kun, that’s water.”

“Did you drink it?”

“Eh? No, that girl said it was wate-“

“Come on! Bring it on! Is that all-“

Water balloon after water balloon sailed bulls-eye into the vice principal’s face.

I went over and snatched the girl’s sake bottle from her.

“Agh! Hey! Don’t do that!”

“Ugh, where did you get this back...?”

“It’s a celebration, so it’s ok! You idiooot~~!”

“Celebration? So everything worked out okay?”

“Mufufufu. Everything’s settled. Give it back, ughhh~~...”

She continued to toss water balloons at the vice principal with a huge smile on her face. She really seemed to be in high spirits.

“If you need something, feel free to call on oniichan here. Kids shouldn’t drink sake.”

“It’s just water~. ... Oniichan, give it baaack~.”

“If it’s not sake, then I’ll give it back.”

I wanted to test what exactly this was, so I tipped the bottle back and took a sip.

“Hngh!”

This was definitely sake! Was this brat seriously drinking something this strong?!

I let out a groan, and at the same time, the vice principal took off his blindfold. And then... our eyes met.

“Aikawaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!”

Just as the vice principals voice began to ring in my ears... the sake-drinking little girl ran away.

Chapter 4: Part 2

Partially because the Japanese teacher had seen everything and protested on my behalf, I once again managed to escape from suspension.

If I met that damn sake-drinking little girl one more time, I really wouldn't be happy unless I smacked her one.

As I walked around with an angry look on my face...

"Ayumu."

That cute voice stopped me. It was a voice powerful enough to get my facial muscles to relax and to reduce me to rubbery mush.

It was... Yuu, wearing a chiffon one-piece.

"Yuu, is the whole bunny girl thing over already?"

She gave me a small, firm nod. She was now allowed to show emotion, but maybe by force of habit she remained emotionless.

"Haruna caught someone random and forced her to switch with me."

"That idiot... is she still in the track room?"

I wanted to go there right away and just tear into her, but Yuu shook her head.

"She was walking around and exploring things with me... but I don't know where she is now."

"Alright. Do you want to walk around with me then, while we look for her?"

Yuu gave me a strong nod and held out her hand. She wanted to hold hands?

“Let’s hold hands?”

Geez, Yuu’s voice was seriously cute. Instead of responding, I just took her outstretched hand. Well, I guess I had spent the first half of the festival with Haruna, so I’ll spend the rest with Yuu now.

I took a look at the pamphlet, searching for events I hadn’t seen yet.

Oh? There was a magic show outside. Maybe we should go take a quick look.

Going outside, we found a small crowd had gathered in the courtyard between the school building and the gym.

I mean, the crowd wasn’t that big though... it didn’t seem like there weren’t any amazing illusions going on. Of course, that’s to be expected from a school festival magic show.

Taking a good luck, I saw a normal looking guy getting put into a big box.

It seemed like the magic trick was just about to start.

That music which was so fundamental to magic shows blared from a pair of speakers, and then I heard a drumroll .

The magician turned the box around, showing the audience that it was just a normal box.

And then... with a *ding!* the box opened.

Inside, only the clothes of the guy who had gotten in were left.

That was more impressive than I had expected. It was like a snake had shed its skin in there.

“This is clearly the work of Dr. Gero’s android.”¹

That’s even more amazing! I guess it’s true that you’d turn out like this if Cell sucked up all your life energy! A round of applause and laughter rose up around us. Yuu was the only one who remained silent.

This was a rare opportunity for her to laugh and have fun, but Yuu did neither of those things.

After that, the magician brought out the next box he had prepared. He picked another volunteer who went inside, and then did the trick where half the box slides past the other half, seeming to sever the volunteer from the middle.

But no matter how anyone looked at that, it seemed fake. I see, this was why this show wasn’t getting too much of an audience...

Once she saw the audience getting a bit bored, Yuu spoke in an impressed voice.

“As expected from the niisan from Turn A.”²

Hey, it’s not like he was torn to pieces or something!

After that, every time the magician preformed a trick...

“Maybe he used Esper Mami’s teleportation magic³, or...”

“If he’s really Dhalsim from Street Fighter, this would all make sense.”

¹ Dragonball Z reference.

² Gundam Turn A reference to Gym Ghingham.

³ An old manga series.

I see. For some reason, Yuu's mutterings were received very well by the people around us, and the previously boring magic show got really exciting.

"Thank you! I had fun because of you!"

There were people who even came up to us and said that.

More importantly, the members of the Magician's Club who had organized this event all paid Yuu their heartfelt thanks. I and the Magician's Club members were all smiles, but Yuu remained emotionless. She could've showed emotion if she wanted to, but perhaps because she was used to killing those urges, her expression didn't change at all.

I found myself really wanting to see her smile. As I thought that, I took Yuu's hand and we walked further into the courtyard.

After we passed the courtyard, I heard the sounds of singing drifting from the gymnasium.

Was a band putting on a performance or something?

"Ayumu, I have a request."

My heart pounded at the sound of Yuu's cute voice.

Her lovable way of asking that sent my head for a loop, so my frazzled brain could only muster up the electrical signals necessary for...

"W-W-What ish iiit~~?"

I ended up responding in a shaking voice, in the style of Lupin.

Yuu let out a small cough, her expression remaining emotionless.

“I also would like to enter the karaoke tournament.”

Karaoke tournament. According to the school festival pamphlet, starting from eight in the evening and lasting two hours, there would be a karaoke tournament held in the gym.

I see. So these singing voices coming from the gym were because of the karaoke tournament.

However, there was no karaoke machine in this school.

Rather, they were just playing the karaoke versions that came with the CDs. It was a simple event like that.

However, that meant random people couldn't join in, and you had to give the karaoke tournament committee a CD with the karaoke version beforehand to register.

Why exactly did Yuu want to participate in something like that?

No, there was an obvious reason here, I think.

Yuu couldn't even let out her voice until this morning.

It was natural that she would want to sing while she could still use her voice.

“I can't?”

Hnnghhhhhh~~!! This was bad! When I saw her looking up at me with those pretty, pure, blue eyes and going “I can't?” it made me want to move the moon for her.

“Hm. How about we go to karaoke tomorrow?”

It would be Sunday. So let's go out and have a hell of a time with our free day. We could call Tomonori and Orito too, and Haruna would definitely also-

Haruna. I forgot. Yuu might have gotten her voice back, but in exchange Haruna couldn't speak anymore.

I definitely wanted to go to karaoke with Yuu. But... in the end, we also needed someone like Haruna there to be stupid and loud. If we were going to go to karaoke, I wanted to go with everyone...

Yuu probably thought the same way, didn't she?

"I want to sing in front of a lot of people."

I was shocked at her proactive approach.

Yuu was supposed to be a prim and proper, shy princess. I had always thought of her like that.

So I never would have expected her to want to sing in front of a lot of people.

"Why?"

"I want... to have as many people remember my voice as possible. Soon... I will not be able to use it anymore."

"Yuu..." But I found myself at a loss for words. I realized, though, that none of the usual sadness was left in Yuu's eyes. It was replaced by determination and impatience.

It was true. We didn't know how long the current situation would persist. It could be that come tomorrow, all of Yuu's powers would have returned to her.

We couldn't just leave Haruna like that, but I also wanted to hear Yuu laugh more.

Would the day ever come when we all could laugh together?

So, what should we do now? We could do it here on the school grounds where there were plenty of people who could listen, but there was a similar event going on in the gym, and if people had a choice they'd probably go to the gym where there were places to sit.

I wanted as many people as possible to be able to hear Yuu's concert.

... Concert?

I see. That was another idea.

"Yuu. Let's do it!"

"What?"

"A concert!"

"But... how?"

"In return, just be warned that no matter how many people come to listen, you won't be able to stop. Are you prepared for that?"

Yuu gave me a strong, firm nod. Seeing her do that, I turned heel and went back to the place where the magic show had been going on.

"Could I have a minute?"

I called out to the Magician's Club members who were starting to clean up, and explained the situation to them.

And then, when I asked to borrow their huge speakers that they had been using to play music before, they gave me eager nods of approval.

After that, I took out my cell phone.

I dialed... a number I had only recently gotten.

“Hey! This is Yoshida! Yoshida Yuki!”

“Tomonori. Could you do me a favor?”

“A-Aikawa! Getting a call from Aikawa... I’m kinda happy about that! What’s up? Ask anything you want!”

“I want permission to use the school grounds. I don’t think the teachers have a very good opinion of me so it’s hard for me to ask them... Hiramatsu and Mihara are also with you, right?”

Hiramatsu and Tomonori had a good rapport with the teachers, so they’d probably be able to get the permissions we needed in one shot.

“Yeah! We’re watching Cinderella right now!”

“... Don’t use your phone in the middle of a play.”

“Aikawa was the one who called me!”

“Anyways, can you do that for me?”

“Roger! What do you want to do on the school grounds?”

“An outdoor concert.”

Tomonori could probably imagine my idiotic grin from the other side of the line.
She burst out laughing.

Bursting out laughing during Cinderella was pretty rude towards the Drama Club...

Chapter 4: Part 3

She wanted as many people as possible to hear her voice. In order to grant Yuu's wish, I went around looking for a certain someone.

Most of the cafés had already closed, seeming to suggest that the school festival was soon going to be over.

Where was she? Where was that girl? I went completely around the school building once, but I couldn't see that crowd of people.

She should've been walking around with a huge group of people. I thought that would make her easy to find, but I couldn't see her anywhere. If I didn't hurry, the school festival would soon be over.

Where the hell was she?! Where was Lovely Kirara-tan?!

On my way to the old school building, I came upon a certain person. It was a single girl holding up a sketchbook with both hands. And on that sketchbook was written...

Las Vegas.

"Why the hell are you hitchhiking?!"

I really couldn't ignore this opportunity to butt in.

It was a short, little girl, wearing plate armor and gauntlets.

A masou shoujo with chestnut hair and big cat-like eyes. Huh? What happened to that magical energy suction thing she was wearing around her neck? Maybe she realized that was the cause of her problems and tossed it away.

Ayumu. What are you doing?

"I'm glad I found you. I need you for something."

What?

"Write a song for Yuu too."

Already did.

"Huh?"

That leaf woman wrote the lyrics. I did the composition. It's recorded on the CD.

There were lyrics to that instrumental on the CD?

"Well, alright then. Yuu. Let's use that song for a concert. I'll make sure things are ready, so you go and practice."

"Okay. I will practice."

One CD is 10000 yen. Thank ya!

"Stop trying to get money out of your friends!"

Yuu and Haruna both went into the old school building to practice. I took out my cell phone and dialed out to that guy.

"Yo. It's pretty rare to get a call from you."

I had called Orito. He sounded pretty tired... maybe he had worked too hard grilling that yakisoba.

"What's up with the monster café?"

“We just closed the shop. What’s up?”

“Sorry, but I’m trying to find Hoshikawa Kirara...”

“Huh? She just went off with Sera-san... ah, she’s back. Want me to put her on?”

“Please.”

Without even putting me on hold, in five seconds time...

“It’s me...”

I heard an intimidating voice on the other end, and I panicked a bit. But I mustered up my courage and explained the situation.

“Won’t you help us put on a concert?”

Yes. If she put on a concert, then a lot of people were certain to come. She probably had the highest ability to gather an audience out of anybody in this school.

“Don’t feel like it. I’m hanging up-“

“I see. I’ll just have to ask Sera then.”

“Y-You... have you forgotten? If Seraphim’s popularity goes up...”

“Then that’ll be the same as picking a fight with you and your leader’s daughter? Yeah, I remember. But if you’re dead set on refusing me-“

“Are you trying to coerce me?”

“Nah. I just want to hear you put on a concert, plain and simple.”

“Don’t patronize me. Do you really think I’d believe a lie like that? Tell me the

truth, and then I'll make a decision."

I told Saras what was happening. About how Yuu could finally speak, about how she wanted to sing. About how she wanted her song to be heard by a lot of people.

And then, about how I wanted to make sure everything was prepared for her.

After I had told her everything...

"I understand. I will definitely help."

She quickly gave me the OK.

"Really?"

"I have heard of the misfortunes of Eucliwood Hellscythe. If there's anything I can do--"

"You really are a tsundere, aren't you?"

"T-This isn't a joke! We've done everything so we can resurrect our old leader!"

"But... thanks."

"... You're welcome."

After that, all that was left was to wait for everything to come together.

I felt myself slowly growing more and more excited.

Yuu and Haruna had to restrain their feelings like this? When I thought about that, I finally realized how dreadful a task it was to control your emotions.

Chapter 4: Part 4

Saras would put on a concert. That alone was enough to fill the school grounds with people.

Geez, she seriously was popular...

It seemed the play had also ended, and I saw Tomonori and Hiramatsu in their sailor outfits standing there, as well as Anderson-kun and Mihara wearing their school uniform on top of their basketball jerseys. Also... Ori-whatever was in the front row trying to fire up the crowd.

The four of us – me having changed into my school uniform, Yuu in her chiffon one-piece, Haruna in her plate armor and gauntlets, and Sera still wearing the Hanako-san of the Toilet red skirt she had put on – were behind the morning assembly stage setting up the songs.

Of course, Haruna also wanted to join in on Saras's concert, but if she spoke out loud terrible things would happen, so...

All the spotlights soon focused on one spot and illuminated the idol. The speakers began to blare out music so loud that it would be audible from any point on the school grounds.

Saras stood on the morning assembly stage with a microphone.

"If you want to die, step forwards!"

What an oppressive performance there on the mic .

"Kirara-taaann~~!! Kill us with your loveliness~~!!"¹

¹ He literally says something more like "moe us to death."

Her words seemed to be well-received by the crowd. By the way, the person babbling that was a certain spiky-haired bespectacled male. Wait, wasn't he the one who hated Saras?

Seeing that huge wave of excited people out there was making Yuu pretty nervous.

"How did the song practice go?"

"I am fine... I had already practiced the song when we were making Haruna's CD."

I see. Ever since she had lost the ability to speak, Yuu had probably always wanted to sing.

She closed her eyes and her shoulders rose and fell as she took a few deep breaths. She placed her hand on her chest, almost as if she was holding onto her heart.

I never thought I'd see Yuu acting this nervous...

"There's no need to fear. Hellsythe-dono is a very good singer."

Sera sent her a smile. It was a kind smile I was sure would never be aimed at someone like me.

"When you're feeling nervous like this, you should write the kanji for 'person' in your hand three times."

"The shoji screen has eyes?"

Now that she mentioned it, I guess that monster did something like this...

"Your hand.." Sera took Yuu's pale hand and began to massage it.

“This is a trick to help you relax. You should feel a bit better after this.”

“Thank you... I am fine now.”

“I’ve... always dreamed of the day when I would hear those words coming from Hellscythe-dono’s mouth.”

I felt the same way. Also, I would be moved too if I could massage Yuu’s hands while they weren’t enclosed in those gauntlets.

I want to sing too.

“That’s clearly not going to happen. Just be a good girl and settle down.”

Haruna gave me a grumpy look as she whacked her hand on her memo pad.

And then, Lovely Kirara-tan’s song began.

It wasn’t some cute pop song... it was a full-out English rock number.

Even though she looked so cute and lovely!

Haruna’s eyes sparkled. It looked like she just couldn’t keep still, and made a full dash towards the audience from behind the stage.

She really wasn’t trying at all to hold in her emotions, was she?

After the song had ended and the crowd had roared their applause, Saras swept her hair up, specks of sweat glittering in the night air, and then descended from the stage.

“Well then, Eucliwood Hellscythe. Our goddess. Enjoy yourself to your fullest.”

Saras faced Yuu and went down on one knee.

The vampire ninja race was originally created by Yuu, so it wasn't an exaggeration for them to consider her a goddess.

"Ayumu-"

"Are you scared?"

Yuu shook her head.

"I am fine. I will try my best, so please watch."

I couldn't see any smile on her face, but I'd like to think that there was a bit of joy mixed in with her voice.

I'm sure I was full of smiles at that moment. Saras didn't say a word, but just smacked me upside my head.

"What the hell was that for?"

"You should be grateful. Being hit is the proof of friendship."

Well, if you don't know somebody well enough, I guess you wouldn't be able to hit them too much.

"So, does that mean you want to be friends with me?"

"Don't get cocky, you little vermin!"

As Saras punched me with her fist, I looked up at the stage. I seriously didn't understand this person anymore.

Meanwhile, the silver-haired girl in the white chiffon one-piece was adjusting the height of the microphone.

The audience had come to see Saras, but their excitement didn't die down at all when Yuu appeared on stage.

And the minute Yuu began to send her angelic singing voice ringing over the crowd...

It began to pour rain.

At the sudden, fierce downpour, people began to make a desperate dash towards the school building.

The lights went out, and the minute the grounds were enveloped in darkness, a scream rang out.

"Uwaahh! This isn't good!"

Tomonori and Anderson-kun hurriedly began to dismantle the speakers and other equipment on the stage.

Everyone was in a huge panic trying to find shelter from the rain.

"Kirara-tan! Over here!"

"No, it's not like I mind the rain..."

But her fans took her by the hand and led her away into the school building.

The only people left there were Yuu, Haruna, Sera, and myself. The concert had ended. And there wasn't anything we could do. It was the weather, after all.

“Haruna.”

The rain was coming down so hard that a fine mist was rising around us. In the midst of that, Yuu called out Haruna’s name with a hint of frustration in her voice.

“Hm?”

“This is because Haruna showed emotion.”

Yuu’s pale, frail hands were shaking.

She was probably really, really looking forward to this concert.

She was looking forward to it so much that her nervousness only added to her enjoyment.

And Yuu... this Yuu who always blamed everything on herself... she was glaring at Haruna.

Her wet silver hair swayed sadly from side to side as she was pelted by the rain.

“Haruna, don’t tell me... were you jealous of Yuu’s concert?”

Haruna firmly shook her head. Even though her hair was completely wet, her ahoge still bounced from side to side.

-

I also wanted to hear the gloomy necromancer sing.

-

The rain blurred those words on her memo pad, and I couldn't really read them too clearly...

But it seemed the Haruna was just simply enjoying the school festival. That was all.

When Yuu couldn't control her emotions and had fun, she would end up meeting people that she didn't want to meet.

In Haruna's case, the thing she didn't want to meet was a typhoon. The one thing she didn't want to visit this school festival she was enjoying so much was a typhoon.

"If Haruna controls her emotions, the rain will definitely stop."

Yuu's blue eyes seemed to be begging me for help.

Yuu then seemed to realize what she was saying, and spoke again while tousling her hair.

"I apologize. I am in no position to be able to say something like that."

She was the one who stole Haruna's emotions away from her.

So it was presumptuous of her to tell Haruna to restrain herself. That's probably how she was thinking right now.

"I understand how you might feel, Hellscythe-dono. This is..."

Sera couldn't support or refute what Yuu was thinking. She just stood there, at a loss for words.

"But... I... but... sorry.... I..."

Yuu was someone who was always emotionless and so was not used to expressing her feelings, so it was obvious at a glance that she didn't know what to do.

If Haruna controlled her emotions, huh...?

"Sorry, Yuu."

"Ayumu....?"

"If this girl... if Haruna's enjoying herself from the bottom of her heart, and if she's behaving herself and obeying all the rules... then I can't tell her to stop feeling that joy. When you want to laugh, you just have to laugh."

"Ayumu..."

Sera looked at me with widened eyes. Certainly, I wasn't expecting her to understand my viewpoint.

"So, I'm sorry. I really want you to be able to do what you want to do, but..."

"Thank you."

"Huh?"

"I think... Ayumu also thought that way when I was unable to show emotion... so thank you."

Yuu remained as expressionless as ever. But I could've sworn I spied a faint smile appearing on her lips.

"I had always thought that you considered Hellsythe-dono as a supreme being."

I heard a quiet, dignified voice. But there was no menace in Sera's voice.

And I wondered why she was looking right at me with eyes filled with hope.

“Certainly, Yuu is really important to me... but that doesn’t mean Haruna isn’t. And of course-“

You are too. But before I could say that, Sera placed her index finger on my lips.

“Your explanations are always so unclear and hard to understand... but I know what you want to say. You don’t have to say it.”

As always, when it came to things like this, Sera could see right through me.

Meanwhile, Haruna had a fairly conflicted look on her face.

You know, Haruna, you might always be the one leading us around by the noses, but it’s not like we hate you for it.

Haruna... you think of us the same way, right?

Ayumu’s words were the grossest thing I’ve ever heard.

“You little brat, I’ll make it so you’ll never laugh or cry again!”

I grabbed Haruna’s soft, impertinent cheeks with both my hands, and then... a sudden burst of wind blew into us.

A burst of wind so strong that it was hard to keep my eyes open.

Haruna was close to being blown off her feet, and she grabbed onto my clothes.

As the scene around us turned into something that could’ve been taken straight out of a TM Revolution promo video, I somehow managed to dig my feet into the ground and prevent us from getting blown away.

Sera's red miniskirt blew up and I caught a wonderful glance of black fabric! I saw the back of a foot. It wasn't the wind this time, but a kick that had almost sent me flying.

And then, the stage also moved. But it wasn't sliding to the side.

Rather, one of its legs was lifting up into the air, and the stage was close to falling on its side.

Yuu was still standing on top of there and she gripped onto the microphone stand. I caught hold of the leg of the stage as it lifted up and held onto it.

Sing.

I heard the sound of clothing flapping in the wind. Haruna stood there holding out her memo pad to Yuu with both hands, almost like some lawyer announcing "victory!" after she had won a big lawsuit.

"Eh?"

Yuu stared back with puzzled eyes, but Haruna continued thrusting her memo pad at Yuu.

I also wanted to hear the gloomy necromancer sing.

That was the same memo she had showed me a bit ago.

Haruna and Yuu's gazes met.

"But... in the middle of this rain..."

Yuu shook her head. The grounds were a lonely place right now, and the only people here to hear Yuu sing would be me, Haruna, and Sera. But then...

“Yoohoo~~.”

“Yahoo~~.”

The wind blew over a male-female duo, both with happy looks on their faces.

“This is fun! I love typhoons like this!”

I saw a girl wearing a sailor uniform spinning around, and spouting her usual idiotic delusions.

“You’re gonna get soaked, Tomonori.”

“Hehe~~.” Tomonori gave me a teasing smile and flicked her skirt up.

“I thought something like this would happen so I came wearing a swimsuit underneath!”

Well, whatever the case, you’re going to catch a damn cold in that...

“So? What about you?”

This kind of weather really didn’t seem like the kind that would suit the spiky-headed guy standing next to her though...

His spiky hair was getting really messed up in this rain, and could he seriously see in this weather with those glasses? But despite all that...

“Come on, let us join in.”

He pointed his thumb towards himself, and laughed. He was as gross as ever, but seeing him with the rain splashing against his glasses, I couldn’t help but just laugh back.

“Yeah, I guess so. You wanna join in?”

I felt a huge hand grab firmly onto the stage leg. It was a hand big enough to cover mine, belonging to a tall young man.

It was the handsome, blue-eyed student, Anderson-kun.

“Yuki-chan started running off somewhere, so I followed her here.”

Next, Mihara came. You guys are wearing tanktops underneath, so you’re going to all catch colds ...

“... You all... don’t blame me if you get a cold...”

Next, even Hiramatsu came. She kept both her hands on her skirt, almost as if she was deathly afraid of her skirt flipping inside out. Her ponytails swayed in the wind.

“You’re all insane.”

“Nobody wants to hear that from you. Disgusting.”

Sera’s Hanako-chan outfit was almost see-through after getting drenched in the rain, and I found myself averting my gaze from her.

My heart was beating out my chest because I had seen Sera in that immodest getup, right...?

No, that wasn’t it. It was just a sign of how much I loved all these people.

Just being with these people made a sense of excitement well up within my chest.

“Yuu. Is this alright then?”

“Eh?”

“You might not be able to sing to a huge crowd, but you should let these people hear you. Could you do that? I want to show these people how great your singing voice is.”

Just sing. You planning on letting all those special lessons I gave you go to waste?”

“... I understand. I... will sing.”

“Now you’re talking!”

“Yes!”

Yuu’s expression turned serious and she gave us a firm nod. She sounded more full of life at that point than I had ever heard her sound.

And so, like that, Yuu’s concert began.

Her singing voice was more than beautiful enough to win against the rain and wind.

-

A single silver mouse was scurrying around today.

-

The song was a blend of pop and rock that I would never have expected someone like Yuu to sing.

And as expected, her voice was great. I was so engrossed that I suddenly didn't care that I was in the middle of a raging storm.

-

One day, the mouse stopped in her tracks.

And from that first day on,

Her destiny was changed forever.

-

Hiramatsu and Mihara just looked up at Yuu and swayed with the rhythm.

Orito and Tomonori were hopping up and down, in great spirits.

Anderson-kun was... wait, why was he crying? It wasn't like the rain was just making his face wet... those were definitely tears. Was this song really that moving to him?

-

The mouse's destiny was always within her.

It was there, allowing her to live every day stronger than the last.

-

Sera had her arms crossed and eyes closed, and was just listening. Was she trying to pick out Yuu's voice in the midst of all this chaos?

-

And so, the mouse went to town and sang into the night air.

Even darkness can appear to be light.

-

Haruna... like Sera, Haruna also had her eyes closed.

Her gauntletted hands were pressing against her chest, almost as if she was trying to keep herself from getting emotional.

And then... the rain stopped. For Yuu's, for this concert's sake... had Haruna desperately restrained her own emotions and freed her mind from thoughts?

-

And so, the mouse went to town and laughed into the night air.

Before all the truths turned into lies.

-

By the song's climax, Saras's fan club had also begun to run back onto the grounds.

Soon, only a strong wind remained, and the other students also returned.

There were just as many people here as there were for Saras... no, there might've been even more. It seemed like people were even coming from other festival stalls.

But, they had come too late. Yuu's song had already finished.

“Encore!”

That didn’t come from us... indeed, it was coming from male students I didn’t even recognize.

“One more time! One more time!”

And it seemed that Tomonori was saying the wrong thing.

Saras didn’t make another appearance on the grounds, but she did bring back the lights that had been taken away during the storm.

The pretty girl wearing a chiffon one-piece on stage was suddenly illuminated from both sides with lights, and her silver hair glittered in the night.

“I... can sing again?”

“Yeah, sing again. This is exactly what you wanted, isn’t it?”

“Yes... it is.”

She started again from the beginning. But... even though she was trying to get everyone to hear her singing, the wind began to pick up pace. It was almost as if the wind was desperately trying to drown Yuu’s voice out. Haruna could only stop the rain... but it was almost difficult to breathe in this awful headwind.

“The lights! Don’t let them fall!”

I heard Saras yelling. But in the midst of this violent wind... this time, nobody left the grounds. Tomonori and Sera both helped hold onto the stage.

Yuu brushed aside the silver hair that were blowing into her face and gripped onto the microphone.

“I... will not lose!”

A cheer rose out of the crowd. It was almost as if Yuu was a famous idol.

The sound of rushing wind and the rustling of dry leaves reverberated around us, creating an autumn cacophony more ferocious than even the cicadas of summer. However, Yuu was not going to lose.

Yuu wasn't the kind of weak person who would lose to a small bit of misfortune that Haruna had caused.

And then, in the middle of the huge gale and the cheers, Yuu finished her song.

“Everyone! Thank you very much!”

Yuu shut her eyes and shouted that. Her hair sparkled, slick from the rain.

“Hey, what are you doing?!” We heard an angry yell and turned our gazes to the school building.

Our homeroom teacher, Kurisu, was running at us in a jersey. People scattered in all directions like spiders. Mihara and Orito instantly fled, while Sera and Haruna happily followed. I took Yuu by the hand, and chased after them with a smile on my face.

“You lot, get back into the school building already!”

And thus, the concert came to an end.

Chapter 4: Part 5

I soon found myself in front of the school shoe lockers, wringing out my shirt.

Anderson-kun and I were sitting down, half naked, while for some reason Orito was twirling around and around along the wall. Was he trying to make himself into butter or something?

“What do you think Orito is trying to do?”

It was such a strange sight that I couldn't help but ask Anderson-kun, who was sitting next to me.

“He's probably trying to get a view at all the wet uniforms from all angles. I can't say I don't sympathize.”

“I'm happy to hear Anderson-kun sounding like a normal guy for once...”

“Aikawa...”

“Hm?”

Anderson-kun's handsome face looked pretty serious.

It was like watching a warrior braced for death... it was so serious that looking at him with that expression was almost refreshing.

“I want you to tell Eucliwood something for me.”

At his statement, I found myself tensing up.

After all, he had said Yuu's full name.

But I had never told him that Yuu's full name was Eucliwood Hellscythe.

In other words...

"You... aren't a regular human, are you?"

"Randomly changing the subject, aren't we? It really doesn't matter, does it?"

Ahh, I really wanted him to be a normal human, dammit. Was he a vampire ninja or something?

"Goddammit. Why the hell aren't there any normal people around me?"

"You don't know? It's because Eucliwood is here. Well, in any case, that doesn't matter. As I said, could you tell Eucliwood something for me?"

"What do you want me to tell her? I might punch you depending on what you answer."

"... Tell her to take back the powers she's transferred to Haruna."

Thump. My heart began to race.

Why the hell had he said it like that? It was almost like... Yuu had willingly transferred her troublesome powers to Haruna.

He probably guessed what I was thinking from my facial expression. Anderson-kun looked away from me and turned his eyes onto Yuu.

"Eucliwood can share her powers. If she really wanted to, she would be able to transfer the entirety of her powers to someone else."

"There's... no way..."

“We’ve done many experiments, and it’s almost certain. But... up until now, Eucliwood has not done that even once. She could not force anybody else to bear the same pain that she was feeling.”

“That does sound like Yuu.”

“But, she did it this time. I can’t even begin to understand why, but for some reason, she did something that thousands of people had wished her to do in the past but to no avail.”

“...”

I couldn’t say anything in return.

“I wished that I could also enjoy the school festival with Ayumu...”

Yuu had said that before. She already had godlike powers, but to think she would want to go to this school festival so much that she would make a wish for it...

And for that reason, Yuu transferred her powers to Haruna...?

“Only Eucliwood can handle those troublesome powers of hers. If we just leave the situation as is, things are going to just get worse... well, no, things have already gotten pretty bad.”

“You mean this typhoon?”

“If only that was it. Aikawa, let me tell you something. I’ve grown quite fond of my life here. If the masou shoujo try to invade and destroy this world again, I’d fight with all my strength to prevent that.”

“So you’re a defender at heart, huh?”

“Yes. After all, the people of the Underworld and the guardians in this world... our job is to protect. But, this problem goes beyond that. There’s no way to defend against Eucliwood’s destructive powers. After all, they are the powers of destiny.”

“... And if Yuu gets her powers back, things would go back to normal?”

“Yes, they should. She hasn’t gotten her powers back yet... probably because of how much she had wanted to sing. That’s all the more reason why now... I’m coming to you for help. I even exposed myself as someone from the Underworld.”

... So he was from the Underworld?! So Anderson-kun came from the same world Yuu had come from?

“I understand.”

“Do you really?”

“I understand... but I can’t tell her that.”

“..... Why not?”

“I know that I have to tell her. I also don’t want to leave Haruna like that. But... you know? If Yuu can really get her powers back by herself... but she’s deciding not to... then I don’t want to go and force her to.”

“The later we get with this, the worse things will become. You understand that, right?”

“When it gets that bad... I’ll do something about it.”

“I... see. Well, I’m counting on you then. Also, please join my basketball team!”

“Shut up, you...”

Anderson-kun stood up and brushed the dust off his trousers.

“Ah, wait just a second Anderson-kun. There’s one more thing.”

“What is it?”

“It’s just not possible that Yuu would have transferred her powers to Haruna out of her own free will.”

“Not possible?”

“Because Yuu’s the kindest person, while Haruna is the biggest idiot in this world.”

My face was probably overflowing with an embarrassing amount of idiotic confidence when I said that.

“I see.”

Anderson-kun mumbled that, sounding a bit impressed.

Chapter 4: Part 6

And so, a storm had come when the school festival was just about to end. In reality, that storm itself signaled that the festival had ended.

The students suddenly found themselves with nothing to do, and all shuffled back to their classes to clean up.

As the crowd thinned out, Haruna, who had naturally taken the leadership role and was busy ordering people around, suddenly collapsed onto the floor.

“Hey hey, are you alright there?”

“Maybe she wore herself out too much?”

Worried, we ran over to her. Sera and Tomonori and the others also came over, and we surrounded Haruna on all sides.

“Seems... she’s at her limit.”

Anderson-kun had a grave look on his face.

“What limit?”

“People say that there is only one person in the whole world who is able to contain Eucliwood’s magical energy. If you were stuffed but someone kept on forcefeeding you steaks, you would probably collapse as well.”

When I heard that explanation, I was a bit at a loss for what to do.

If I told Yuu to take her powers back, she’d probably do that for me. But...

“Eucliwood Hellscythe...-san.”

Tomonori bowed her head.

“Please! Return Master back to normal! You can do that, right?”

It seemed that to Tomonori, Haruna wasn’t just her Master.

“Can that kind of thing really be possible?”

Sera looked at Yuu with surprise in her eyes.

Tomonori, you... were you eavesdropping on my conversation with Anderson-kun?

“..... I can.”

Yuu’s voice sounded full of apology.

Sera’s eyes narrowed. This was probably the first time she’s ever glared at Yuu.

“You could’ve saved Haruna from her pain... but you didn’t? Is that what you’re saying?”

Yes... that’s what she was saying.

It could’ve been that because of Haruna’s magical energy suction device, Yuu’s powers had been transferred to her. It wasn’t that Yuu had transferred her powers of her own free will.

But even if that were true... Yuu didn’t return things to normal.

All so she could spend today enjoying the school festival.

“Sera.” I grabbed Sera by the shoulder as she began to heat up.

“I know. Please don’t touch me with your filthy hands.”

She brushed my hand off her shoulder. Maybe it was because of the cold, but I felt that her hands were shaking a bit.

“Just for today... just for one day, I wanted more than anything to enjoy myself with Ayumu.”

Both Sera and I were already painfully aware of that fact. Indeed, we knew that Yuu thought like that. And so, neither Sera and I could be surprised or angry any longer.

“Anyways, for now, just snatch those powers back from Master! Please!”

“It is fine... I was planning to do that, after all.”

Yuu shut her eyes.

“Ayumu, while I can still talk, I would like to say to you something I have always wanted to say.”

“What is it?”

Yuu looked at Tomonori and then at Sera, before standing on her toes and leaning in to whisper in my ear.

-

“Thank you. For always being there to support me... thank you so much.”

-

After Yuu said that, she gave me an embarrassed smile.

It was the cutest smile I had ever seen up until now. It was a smile so beautiful that I wanted to hug her right now and take her to some scenic place in Australia where I could shout my love to her. When would be the next time I could see her smile like that?

Could it be that I'd never see that smile again? Just thinking about that made me...

"Haruna. Please come over here."

Haruna stood up, her legs shaking like those of a newborn deer, but then started writing rapidly on her memo pad.

She showed us the first page, where she had written in huge letters:

"What?!"

She flipped to the second page. Once again, in big letters:

"Don't screw with me!"

And then the third page.

"This is my magical energy, so you're not doing anything!"

Understand the mess you're in, you idiot girl!

I put my arms around Haruna from behind her, and forced her over to where Yuu was.

"Alright, go ahead."

Yuu gave me a single nod, and took Haruna by one of her gauntleted hands.

Next, with practiced motions, she took off Haruna's gauntlets and put them on herself. Next, she pressed her forehead to Haruna's. Their lips looked almost close enough to kiss, and I could see Haruna was blushing. Seriously, control your emotions, dammit. You're way too pure and innocent, you know that?

After that... a blue light shone out. A pale smoke began to lift off Haruna like dry ice. That was smoke made of magical energy, but only the few people standing around Haruna knew that.

Yuu's silver hair glittered.

The magical smoke around Haruna began to be sucked into Yuu. Here and there, I also spied ruby-colored light... the magical energy that Haruna originally had as a masou shoujo.

Yuu's work ended in around a minute.

"Now, Master should be oka-"

Tomonori's happy statement was cut short.

There was a kitchen knife sticking into that stomach she was always so worried about. She pitched forwards, and her breath began to come out in sharp, painful-sounding bursts.

And then, the ring Tomonori had on her right ring finger was snatched away.

The person behind all these annoying actions was... Kurisu. Our homeroom teacher.

"Hey, what the hell do you think you're-"

At that moment, I realized that Haruna's magical energy suction device was hanging from our homeroom teacher's neck.

The pale smoke coming from Yuu and Haruna suddenly began to head towards our teacher.

In the middle of that happening, I also saw glimpses of ruby light. Ruby light which flashed in the midst of all that pale smoke.

In the end, it was only Haruna's masou shoujo energy that was flowing towards that old man.

As Kurisu gathered more and more of that ruby light, he began to chuckle.

"Fufufufufu..."

But his ominous laugh was already no longer that of an old man.

I watched as before our very eyes, he grew shorter and his clothing changed.

What... the hell was happening?

"Ehehehe~. I'm finally back! Hooray~~!!"

Right where he was standing was now a petite little girl wearing a white gothic lolita outfit.

It was... that drunk little girl. I see... in other words, when she told me her name was Chris, she didn't mean she was Kurisu's daughter or something... she was actually Kurisu himself.

"Ah! It's you!"

Haruna shouted out. Realizing she had just let out her voice, she clapped a hand to her mouth, but it seemed like even though she had talked, her head didn't hurt.

In other words, Yuu's power had been successfully removed from her. Yuu's face turned pale and she crumbled to the ground.

I suddenly let go of Haruna's hand and grabbed Yuu.

I touched my hand to her forehead.

It was hot... it was really hot. She was probably suffering from an extreme fever like Haruna had been this morning.

Even so, Yuu had a quiet expression on her face.

"Haruna, you know this girl?"

"Of course I know! You idiot!"

I feel it's been a while since I've heard Haruna's energetic scream like this.

"I'd love it if you could tell me a bit more."

"This person is... ah, umm... wait... this person is... right. Chris. Chris-sensei! They say she's the strongest masou shoujo. She's Dai-sensei's sensei!"

So this person was important enough for even Haruna to know her name? Haruna didn't even know Dai-sensei's real name...

Our own homeroom teacher, nicknamed "No Personality," was actually not an old man, but a masou shoujo. And the "strongest," huh...? This was all just so damn sudden that all this felt so out of place...

“Haruna, help Tomonori stop the bleeding. I’ll... talk with this person.”

Still holding onto Yuu, I watched as Haruna went over to the collapsed Tomonori and began to deal with the knife in her stomach.

“Ehehe~. Having a personality feels wonderful. Don’t you think so, Aikawa?”

Having my name suddenly called like that, I found myself at a complete loss for words.

Like I was watching some old television set, the petite little girl in the white gothic lolita outfit blurred for a second, and then I saw her suddenly standing right in front of Tomonori, who was putting pressure on her stab wound and coughing.

“Sorry about that~. When I was that old man, I definitely wouldn’t be able to win against Yoshida without doing that, ya know?”

Even if you just considered the way she talked, this girl was nothing like that “No Personality” homeroom teacher of ours.

“U-Umm... uhh...” Tomonori was also at a loss. Well, anybody would be in her position.

After all, if a middle-aged man turned into a petite, cute girl in front of you, wouldn’t you be shocked speechless too?

Our homeroom teacher... no, this masou shoujo Chris put her right hand in front of her. She spread her five fingers wide, and began to quickly mutter something with a look of supreme confidence on her face.

After that... almost every person crumbled to the ground.

Apart from Haruna, Yuu and me... including Sera, Saras, Tomonori, and Anderson-kun... everyone crumbled.

“No way! She used wide-area memory manipulation without a masou renki!”

Haruna’s words clued me in to what was happening. This was the power of the masou shoujo to wipe out the memories of anybody who didn’t have the power of a masou shoujo.

“My my~~. Aikawa is amazing. He’s a guy but also a masou shoujo~~.”

“You too... what the hell are you exactly? An old man or a little girl?”

Her body blurred again, and this time I found this petite little girl standing right in front of me.

“Ahem. This is my true form!”

“But we’ve met a few times during the school festival. Why were you already in your true form back then?”

“If I get drunk, I go back to my true form!”

“So that’s why you were always drinking? ... Can I ask you something? Why were you in that old man’s body, and why were you our homeroom teacher?”

“You’ll listen? You’ll listen to Chris’s story? Well, you know, I guess it was a century ago... Chris tried to take over Virie and challenged the queen to battle.”

A century ago... I think Haruna was talking about this at some point.

“You’re the person who tried to set up a coup d’état?”

“Yup yup. You’ve studied Virie’s history? Even though all you do in Chris’s class is sleep~~...”

“Nah, I don’t know much about it.”

“It’s not like it matters now, but you know? Back then, Chris thought she could beat anyone, you know? Beat them into the ground, even the queen! But, Chris got completely beaten. She got cursed and her personality and powers were taken away, and then she was driven out of the world.”

She was originally a masou shoujo. I see, that’s why she could still remember the animal transformation incident, even though I had used memory manipulation magic. That magic didn’t have any effect on masou shoujo.

“So, you know? Chris waited a long, loooong time. To an immortal masou shoujo like me, being stuck in an old man’s body and never having anyone pay attention to me was pure hell... but I never gave up and just waited. I picked this world because it seemed like I could meet strong masou shoujo here too~~. Because, you know, the Megalo are pretty strong here.”

Megalo were stronger here? And Anderson-kun had mentioned that I was surrounded by weird people because Yuu was here.

How long exactly has Yuu been in Tokyo? The King of the Night was here because Yuu was here, right? And there were so many vampire ninjas gathering because they were trying to get to Yuu, right? And if weird masou shoujo were coming because the Megalo here were stronger... if you traced that back to its origin... it all came back to Yuu, right?

If that’s true... next time I really wanted to hear about the Megalo more. About the Underworld’s side of the story.

“So you wanted to suck up the magical energy with that device from a strong masou shoujo?”

“Yup yup. And then... I met Haruna.”

“Wha-... you backstabber! To think you were a Demon Baroness!”

Haruna’s ahoge looked like it was ready to explode.

“Demon Baroness? Chris is? No no no. You’ve got it wrooooong~~.”

She stretched out her energetic-looking little body and continued speaking.

Did she know this Demon Baroness person? If I remember correctly... this Demon Baroness was Dai-sensei’s friend, and was the mastermind behind the coup d’état.

“Haruna is super talented. She’s the best in all the masou shoujo I’ve seen up ‘til now! After all, she made this suction device, and so easily!”

I see. Haruna had mentioned that she had borrowed some equipment or something to make that device.

To accomplish that, she didn’t need a student’s aid, but that of a teacher. So, that person who helped her out was our homeroom teacher?

“If I had a device like this, I thought I could get back my masou shoujo powers. But, there was one problem.”

“You would also suck up unwanted things like Yuu’s power?”

“Wow wow! You’re pretty sharp!”

“Unfortunately, I’ve gotten pretty used to nonsense like this...”

“So I was about to give up and drink my sorrows away...”

So this was why she had been drinking so much?

Dammit, when I thought about it, now that I knew that lazy good-for-nothing teacher was actually a petite little girl, everything felt a lot more cuter. When she looked like an old man, I didn’t feel bad about hurling abuse at him because he didn’t work and was annoying... but now if I thought about all that as a little girl trying to do a grownup’s job... it was a different story. Ugh, crap, I just can’t be angry at that! It was all just too cute!

“But then, I saw something interesting by the pool.”

“Pool...”

Wait, does she mean when Tomonori got attacked by those wash basins?

“Yup, it’s just what you think. I never thought that Ariel’s masou weapon would be in Yoshida. And then, I knew about this ring too. This is something you can use to control magical energy, right? So I thought, if I could just get those two things, I might be able to go back to my old self! So right away, I went and borrowed that magical energy suction device that Haruna didn’t need anymore, and then watched for a chance to get to Yoshida. And then... well, you know the rest.”

She held up her skirt and did a single happy twirl.

“Congrats... is what I should say, right? What exactly is your goal here?”

“Revenge... maybe? I still feel bits of that hundred-year grudge in me.”

In other words, she wants to go and beat the queen of Virie?

If she had the same goal as Dai-sensei did, then maybe we should help her.

But...

“Can you give Haruna back her magical energy?”

“Don’t wanna~~~. If Chris gives that back, she’ll go back to being an old man!”

“Huh? Don’t screw with me! Give it back!”

“Wanna try taking it back by force?”

Chris gave us a smile.

Granted, just sitting here and getting played around with like this was hell on the nerves...

And more importantly, this girl had already done one thing I couldn’t forgive her for.

-

When she was still an old man, she had caused harm to Tomonori.

-

If that was just a joke that a petite little girl had played, then I could forgive her... but at that time, she was still an old man.

And I wasn’t generous enough to forgive old men who did foolish things!

“Haruna, you say she’s the strongest masou shoujo, but what you mean is she *used* to be, right?”

“Yeah. The strongest now is Dai-sensei!”

“Should I go for it?”

“Yeah! Go for it, Ayumu!”

How long has it been since I’ve seen Haruna smile like that?

I turned my gaze back onto Kuri- I mean Chris, but...

I felt the back of my head crash into a wall. While that was happening, my limbs were torn off and my heart crushed.

“W-Wait just a second! Don’t do that without any warni-“

“Hey hey, do you know what you need if you want to stay on top?”

She looked like she was having fun. But it wasn’t a happy, innocent kind of fun... her eyes were filled with madness.

“You have to be willing to give anything up! Sorry. You shouldn’t have gone against me. I’m gonna erase your existence now, ‘kay~~?”

“Erase... my existence? You can do something like that?”

If that was possible, then the King of the Night wouldn’t have suffered so much.

“Sorry sorry, I put that wrong. I’m gonna lock you up into a pitch-dark space where time doesn’t exist, ‘kay? There, is that clearer?”

Ah, I see. Wait! That didn’t sound good at all!

... I wouldn’t be able to last one day in a place like that! I’d want to die!

But at that point, Yuu, who had been standing there expressionless, suddenly kneeled and put her head to the ground.

“Forgive them.” I heard those words come out from her mouth.

When I heard those words... well, I guess it wasn't too bad if Haruna didn't get back her magical energy. I started thinking like that. Haruna also...

“Whatever, just do what you want.”

She muttered something like that. Meanwhile, Chris's entire body started shaking.

“Uwah. What powerful words. I'll forgive you this time. But...”

With the same smile still on her face, Chris pulled my head right off my neck...

“There won't be any forgiveness next time, 'kay?”

Brr. I felt a tremendous shiver run right up my spine.

Although, I was only a head right now, so it's not like I had a spine...

Chris casually tossed my head away and gave a stretch.

“Anyways... Chris needs to get back into form. Maybe she'll go find and kill the strongest person around~~.”

She went on announcing her next crime, and then her body blurred and vanished.

I could tell clearly that Chris's attempts at revenge could make some huge waves. And those huge waves might throw the entire world into chaos. And yet, I couldn't care less about any of that.

But, she had taken something. Something... something important that belonged to someone important to me.

If I didn't get Haruna's magical energy back, then she'd just get depressed again.

And I didn't ever want to see her tears again.

Chapter 4: Part 7

Once things had been tidied up to a degree, we all left for home. Haruna hated cleaning, and Yuu had a variety show she wanted to catch, so they had gone home first and I found myself returning all by my lonesome.

A full moon was out tonight. Unlike sunlight, moonlight was my friend. If I was under moonlight, I could use all my zombie powers.

Maybe I was in the eye of the hurricane, or maybe the storm had already ended, as there was no more rain, and only a strong wind was blowing.

I parted ways with Orito at the school gate and looked up at the moon.

And then I began to walk down the wide path running along the four-lane street near our school.

There were no cars on the road, and there weren't many other pedestrians either. There were still probably people cleaning up after the school festival. Because our homeroom teacher had suddenly disappeared, the Japanese teacher filled in for her, but ended up letting me and Orito go home early. And that was only because...

"... Aikawa-kun and Orito-kun... they worked really really hard."

It was only because an honors student like Hiramatsu told the teacher that for us. I mean, it's not like I wouldn't have stayed and helped clean up, but I was so exhausted that I decided to take advantage of the offer.

Maybe I'd visit the cemetery for a bit and then head home. The school festival was pretty fun, but quite a few things had happened... I took a quick stop at a convenience store, but then...

“Hentai... dono.” I heard a pretty voice on this supposedly empty road.

It was a voice I had heard before... many times.

“What is it? ... Sera.”

I turned around, and saw a single ponytailed beauty standing there.

She was wearing a knitted turtleneck and a cardigan. She wasn't wearing that red Hanako-san of the Toilet skirt anymore, but instead had replaced it with a pair of jeans.

“I... After today, I find I don't understand Hellscythe-dono anymore.”

Sera's arms were crossed and resting on her soft bosom. She looked a bit lost.

“I understand Yuu perfectly though.”

“She's supposed to be the kindest existence in the world. That's why I sought her out. However... even though Haruna was in pain, she did nothing to help. Well, if she would be causing herself pain by helping, I suppose that was the correct decision, but...”

“It isn't like Yuu, you mean?”

“Yes. As far as I know, Hellscythe-dono has always been extremely self-sacrificing.”

“So, do you hate Yuu now?”

The minute I asked that, Sera poked my eyes out.

“Who in the world said something like that?”

“Is it that unforgiveable that Yuu chose to not sacrifice herself this time? I don’t think so. She probably just wanted to be a bit selfish. Just for today... no, just for the school festival. Sera, let me be honest with you. I really wanted Yuu to take her emotions back. The Yuu of the past would probably never have been able to. But, the Yuu of the present... the Yuu that now has her own desires and wants... I think that the day will come when she will be able to do that. So-“

At that point, Sera once again put her long index finger against my lips.

“I understand. And I agree with your viewpoint completely. In other words, you want to say the following, correct? Hellsythe-dono and Haruna should do what they want to do, and you’ll just clean up after them... yes?”

“Exactly. That’s exactly it.”

“Will you allow me to join you in that, then?”

“Of course. If you ever have anything you want to do, go ahead-“

“Not that. I will join you for clean-up duty.”

That’s true. That kind of role definitely fit Sera better. Actually, doing something for the sake of someone else was probably what this girl wanted to do anyways.

“Got it. I’ll be counting on you then.”

“Of course. Hentai-san.”

“Give me back my first name, dammit!”

Sera and I laughed loudly together. It really was a rare opportunity for me to be able to laugh together with Sera like this.

At that point...

“You two are getting along as well as always. Makes me a bit jealous.”

It was Saras, in a sailor’s uniform and carrying her schoolbag in one hand.

Sera suddenly stopped laughing, and returned back to her dignified expression.

“Did you live around here?”

“Huh? Is there a problem with me wanting to go to a convenience store?”

Saras’s glare was as sharp as a blade.

“Ah, okay. I’m sorry then.”

“Well, whatever. There’s also something I want to say to you.”

“To me?”

“Well then, if you’ll excuse me...”

Perhaps she felt awkward, but Sera gave us a quick bow and began walking away.

“I know that you are Mael Strom’s husband. So, I will... I will steal a kiss from you now. If you do not want to become my husband, you best protect yourself to the death.”

At her words, Sera turned around immediately, her ponytail whipping behind her. Her eyes were wide with shock.

“Saras, do you have any idea what you’re saying right now?!”

“Yes, naturally... Seraphim. Who do you take me for?”

“Wait wait wait wait! What the hell is going on?!”

“In other words... I am confessing my love to you.”

..... Huh?

“Do not worry. You will enjoy it.”

Her lips came closer. And my body was shocked stiff.

Just seeing those soft lips of hers were enough to make my heart erupt in a frenzy of alarm bells.

“Saras!” Sera quickly grabbed Saras by the shoulder and held her back.

“Do you intend to stand in my way?”

“Saras, exactly what part of this person has you acting this way?”

“Yeah. You really don’t have any reason to love me.”

“You... do you really intend on making me say that the shape of your butt is so irresistible to me? What a pervert.”

“That’s the reason?!”

“People can fall in love for even the most trifling of reasons.”

“I really had no idea you were this much of an idiot.”

“This has nothing to do with Seraphim, does it? Now then, you will-“

At that point, Saras cut her sentence short.

And then, she took out a water bottle from her bag and tossed the bag away.

A black mantle appeared on her back, and her eyes bled red.

Don't tell me... was she planning on fighting Sera here? But my prediction turned out to be off the mark.

"Seraphim!"

Saras shouted that out. But before those words reached Sera, Sera had already leapt to the side.

The wind... was blowing. The wind again? Ugh, everything that's gone wrong today has been because of the wind...

The wind gouged into the asphalt and twisted the roadside guardrails out of shape, heading straight for us.

And I... just couldn't move.

"Don't just stand there, idiot!"

But before Saras's voice could reach me, I had already been thrown into the air. I heard the noise of my own bones being crushed. My innards were pulverized, and I spat out a mouthful of blood.

"Wow woow~~. Two of you dodged that!"

Someone appeared clapping her hands... the person who had attacked us... and she was...

A petite, little girl wearing a white Gothic Lolita outfit.

Chris. The masou shoujo who had vanished just a few hours before. Why in the world was she here?

“Y-You! To think you really were here...”

Saras sounded shocked, and I frowned.

“Saras... do you... know this girl?”

I managed to wheeze that question out.

“I told you about her before, didn’t I? I’ve challenged this person before. This... is the demon of legend.”

This person? The demon of legend? ... This was the person Sera had to defeat to complete her test?

Sera’s test... was to defeat who people were calling the strongest masou shoujo?!

Saras glared daggers at Chris, but Chris just laughed.

“Chris doesn’t remember at all~~. Have we played before? Well, whatever... let’s play again! You’re the strongest around here, right? Hoshikawa Kirara-san~~.”

Saras looked a bit shocked at getting called by her school alias.

Now that I thought about it, Chris had wanted to get back in form or something and wanted to kill the strongest person around here. That’s when she darted off. So... she was talking about Saras.

“Can you move?” I heard that mumble, but I couldn’t answer anything back.

I had suffered so much damage that I couldn't talk anymore. Saras clicked her tongue without taking her eyes off Chris.

"Saras..."

"Seraphim... can you take him off somewhere? He's an eyesore."

The pretty girl who had just confessed her love to me a minute ago was now calling me an eyesore.

"I don't want to touch him. He's just too disgusting. Also, this is my test."

Sera also manifested her black mantle, and her jade eyes turned red. After that, green leaves began to swirl around her. We might have been deep into autumn, but these leaves were as green as if it were the beginning of summer. Sera grabbed onto one of those leaves and turned it into a sword.

"You're as insubordinate as ever. Nothing like the person you used to be."

Saras turned her water bottle down towards the asphalt. The water that flowed to the ground became a sword in Saras's hands.

"Here I go."

The first one to move was Sera. With speed my zombie eyes couldn't follow, she moved to Chris's flank.

"Hiken, Tsubamegaeshi!"

Alright, Chris didn't seem to be following her. A masou shoujo who hadn't transformed and didn't have her masou renki should be no more dangerous than an ordinary girl. Haruna could just do normal pro-wrestling moves, so if she was only that strong...

But, Sera's Tsubamegaeshi depended on a shallow first slash, followed by a finishing return strike. In this case, her blade was stopped cold at the first cut.

"I'll give you 80 points for your speed, but everything else is around 40 points or so. Mnn, you're pretty weak."

Chris touched her hand to Sera's shoulder. The next instant, Sera's arm had been torn off.

Sera's eyes opened wide and her scream reverberated all around us. Chris mercilessly pointed her palm towards Sera.

But faster than the wind from before, a water shuriken shot forth like a bullet and deflected Chris's arm.

A crater formed right next to where Sera was. It was like someone had thrown a huge boulder down from the roof of a nearby building.

Sera grabbed her arm and attached it to her shoulder while getting away. It seemed that vampire ninjas could also reattach fallen body parts. As expected from the undead.

"Whoaa~~! Amazing! Even Chris couldn't see that attack right now! As expected!"

It seemed like Chris hadn't suffered any damage. She came a step towards us, a happy expression on her face.

"Seraphim!"

"Yes! I understand!"

Sera stood up and shut her eyes. Maybe she wanted to put some distance between her and Chris, but Saras leapt over the guardrail and dashed for the opposite side of the street.

“The secret of my blade lay not in the blade that is hidden!”

Saras’s voice echoed from the other side of the street.

“Blades that fly as leaves on a tree, that is...”

I heard Sera’s quiet voice too. And then...

“Hiken, Hyakkizensatsu!”

Their two voices became one. And then, countless leaves and water droplets attacked Chris. This wasn’t just a matter of hundreds. Thousands of blades screamed directly towards Chris.

Seeing that, Chris smiled and held out her hand. Those countless blades were just about to simultaneously assault this little girl.

The wind whipped up, and a few hundred blades crashed into the ground or a wall. However, that wasn’t enough.

This attack from all directions... that wasn’t enough to defend against it. Dai-sensei had defended against it once, but that was because Sera was the only person attacking. Sera’s leaves didn’t even make up a third of those thousands of blades. Saras’s Hyakkizensatsu was just on a completely different level.

A blade pierced into Chris’s left arm. She danced around nimbly and used her wind to defend, but the blades she couldn’t defend against all struck her left hand.

This girl... she knew she couldn't defend against all of it so she sacrificed her own damn arm.

After the surging waves of leaves and water had subsided, Chris took her right arm and brushed off the mountain of blades in her left arm, like she was brushing off dust from a coat.

Her left hand... was completely unharmed.

What the hell was this?! She was way too strong!

"That was a good workout. Could I ask you kindly for some more?"

"You damn monster..." Saras ground her inner teeth painfully.

Alright. My body had mostly repaired itself.

As for Sera... it seems like she was going to need more time. I see. Vampire ninjas couldn't reattach body parts so quickly like zombies could.

"Ayumu..." Sera called to me feebly.

"What's wrong?"

"I... don't have enough blood. At this rate... I will die."

Something stirred in my chest. Was she serious?

"You can't reattach that arm?"

"I no longer have enough blood to do that. I used most of my blood already on my Hyakkizenmetsu."

“Vampire ninjas use their own blood for their attacks?”

“Yes. Saras also used quite a lot of her blood for that attack. She probably will not be able to fight for much longer.”

“So we’re in a desperate situation... you just need blood, right? Just drink. Drink my blood.”

“Drinking the blood from a male you are not married to is...”

It went against vampire ninja laws or something? I was a bit tired of hearing that, and I let out a single sigh.

“We’re family, right?”

“But, if I kiss you, that would mean-“

“We don’t have to kiss then.”

“Having your blood sucked without medicine... is extremely painful.”

I see. She kissed people before sucking their blood so she could administer painkilling drugs.

“In fact, I want to be in pain. I’m a pervert, remember?”

Sera shut her eyes and bit into my neck.

I felt the strength drain from my entire body... it really was quite pleasant, you know. I’ll definitely have to ask her to suck my blood again after this.

Saras was attacking Chris with her water swords.

But no matter how she cut her, Chris was unwounded. Or rather, the minute she was cut, the cut would heal.

She was more of a zombie than I was, that damn homeroom teacher.

Saras continued to avoid Chris's attacks with a unique little dance, and then she took a small hop back. It was a bit high for a back step, and Chris wasn't about to let that opportunity slip by her.

Before Saras got her feet back on the ground, Chris gripped Saras's face with her small hands and slammed her into the ground.

And then, as if striking a match, Chris moved around at high speeds while dragging Saras with her.

Krchhhh... Saras's body became horizontal, and waved around like she was being used in some new kind of ribbon gymnastics.

"Ahahahaha!"

I heard the sound of childish laughter, along with a commotion not unlike what you'd hear at construction sites when they broke boulders. One of the four car lanes began to turn bright red.

Saras grabbed onto Chris's small hand. Her water sword pierced into Chris's body, but she didn't get any response.

After Saras was pushed right into the asphalt, that wind once again formed a huge crater in the ground. With Saras at its center.

"Sera, can you fight?"

"I'm at my limit trying to heal my arm. Just give me a bit longer..."



Saras sent Chris flying with a kick and readied her water sword. Her sailor uniform was dripping with her blood.

I wanted to go and help her as soon as possible, but Saras shouted at us.

“You two, run away.”

“Saras...”

“I will protect you two with my life. For the love of God, run away.”

We couldn't win here. So... she would do it alone. I could understand her feelings all too well.

“No, let me take over. Saras and Sera, you two run away-”

“You fool... At least let me have my moment. Do you want me to kill you?”

I got it. If it were me, I wouldn't even be able to buy us an extra second. Also, Chris was aiming only for Saras right now. It was possible she would kill Saras and then turn her attention to us.

“Twenty seconds. Just buy us twenty seconds. I'll... leave it up to you, Saras.”

I turned my back to the now completely bloodied Saras... and holding Sera, I took off at a full sprint.

“Yes. You've made the right decision, Aikawa Ayumu.”

I pushed my zombie legs as far as I could while I ran towards home.

“Ayumu, why are we leaving Saras behind?! You're the worst!”

But I didn't have enough time to pay attention to Sera's shouting.

Our house was around a five minute walk from the school. I ran that distance... in fifteen seconds. Well, granted, we were already on the way home, so the actual distance was a bit shorter than that.

I opened the front door and let go of Sera. And then... I reached out for the chainsaw that was standing in the entranceway like an umbrella.

"You... don't tell me..."

Sera instantly could guess what I was about to do.

I began to chant.

"Nomobuyo, woshi, hashitawa, dokeda, gunmiicha, dei, ribura."

My school uniform ripped off, to be replaced by a cute pink cosplay outfit. Never before had I wanted to transform into a masou shoujo more than today.

And then, I turned heel and went out of the house. Flying through the air, I went back to where Saras had been. Now that I had transformed, I managed to get back to where we were much faster. It took a bit longer than twenty seconds.

But... Saras was nowhere to be found.

"Thank you! You brought Chris a masou renki, didn't you~?"

Chris burst out laughing. I saw that both her hands were dyed red with blood.

"Saras... what happened to Hoshikawa Kirara?"

I groaned that question out. But... I didn't have to hear her response to know.

“She’s gone. Not a trace left, smashed to smithereens.”

Which is why before she could even finish that sentence, I had lifted my chainsaw over my head. The chainsaw blades whirled angrily, as if telling her of my rage.

The chainsaw cut down into Chris’s Gothic Lolita outfit. But... she was left unwounded.

Chris’s hand touched me on the stomach. I managed to twist away a bit, but even then some of the flesh from my side was stripped away.

“Wow woow~~! Chris was all wrong! The strongest around here is Aikawa!”

“Why, thank you...”

I took Chris’s hand, wanting to crush them, but...

The moment I touched her hand, the left side of my body exploded. Had my heart exploded along with that?

But I paid that no mind and continued to attack with my chainsaw. But Chris grabbed onto my weapon with just her thumb and index finger, and managed to stop my attack.

She kicked me away, and I ended up letting go of the chainsaw from the shock.

“Ah, that was fun. I’ll be taking Mystletainn, ‘kay?”

The little girl gave me a bold smile, and I stopped in my tracks.

“You’re not taking anything.”

“Ehhh, but Chris needs a masou renki for her revenngeee~~.”

“You’ve already taken one of Haruna’s precious belongings. I won’t give you anything more.”

“Ah, right. I have to call you oniichan when I ask you for something, yes~~?”

She chuckled and tossed the chainsaw up like a beanbag.

“I won’t hand it over! Definitely not!”

I took my right arm and once again grabbed onto the chainsaw.

“Pleaaase~. Oniiiiichan~~.”

She gave me an angelic smile, and ripped the chainsaw away from me forcibly.

“You’re pretty desperate there, oniichan. Annoying. Shall I send you back into two dimensions?”

That damn innocent smile of hers was annoying me to hell. What was up with this monster? What should I do? What would actually work on her? Could I... really not deal her one single wound?

“Bye bye... oniichan.”

I fell into a pitch black world.

Still in my masou shoujo outfit... with the left half of my body blown off... I found myself sinking into what felt like a black pool. Was this what space was like?

Huh? But... why was the chainsaw also there? Hadn’t it been snatched away?

Where was I? Where the hell was I?

I closed my eyes, and when I opened again... I found myself standing in front of my front door.

What the hell happened? I had no idea.

Did... somebody save me?

END CHAPTER 4





F-FINALLY, I GOT A LOVE CONFESSION FROM AIKAWA!
I WAS IMAGINING SOMETHING LIKE ME BEING IN AUSTRALIA
SPREADING THE ASHES OF A DEAD LOVER AND BESIDES
MYSELF WITH GRIEF WHEN AIKAWA CALLS ME FROM
KOU SHIEN (1) CONFESSING HIS LINDYING LOVE FOR ME...
BUT...

HUH? WAIT. I... NEVER GOT CONFESSED TO AT ALL?
IN FACT, I EVEN GOT MY ENGAGEMENT RING STOLEN!
THAT DAMN KURISU-SENSEI... I WON'T EVER FORGIVE HIM.
I'LL MAKE HIM REGRET EVER PICKING A FIGHT WITH A
VAMPIRE NINJA.

VAMPIRE NINJAS MIGHT ONLY BE 1+1, BUT IF WE HAVE A
THOUSAND OF THEM THEN WE'LL BE A HUNDRED TIMES
STRONGER!

IF ONLY OUR CHIEF WAS HERE... THEN WE'D BE ABLE TO
GET A THOUSAND OF US TOGETHER NO SWEAT...

(1) JAPAN'S HIGHEST-RANKED HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL
TOURNAMENT.

Epilogue: Part 1

And so, the curtain fell on our school festival.

Tomonori was crying after her ring was taken away, Haruna was in complete shock after her magical energy was stolen, Yuu was collapsed with a high fever, Sera wasn't saying a word, and that was how our Sunday ended.

But when Monday rolled around, I caught a glimpse of a familiar sight in our living room.

The plasma television was showing a variety show Yuu had taped because she couldn't watch it during the school festival, and Yuu was drinking tea in her usual plate armor and gauntlets.

Next to her, a ponytailed beauty was sitting on her knees with a dignified expression on her face.

If there was one thing that was different... it was that we had brought out a kotatsu.¹

Tap tap. Yuu tapped the table twice and wrote something on her memo pad.

Good morning. = "Oniichan, good morning~! I love you~~!!"

Ahh, after her revival, the little Yuu in my head was more vivid than ever. Yuu's singing voice the other day was just too cute and I couldn't even sleep.

I was probably giving off a huge smile right then, because Sera chose to grip me tightly by the nose.

¹ A square, heated low table, often used in winter. It's warm and cozy underneath.

“Seeing you from far away, you’re already quite disgusting, but now that I see you close up you’re even more disgusting. Please go and disappear somewhere.”

She looked at me with frigid jade eyes.

“Ayumu! Look at this! I made you the strongest bento box today too!”

A little girl with chestnut hair dashed out from the kitchen, her ahoge bouncing back and forth.

It had gotten pretty cold, but that didn’t stop her from continuing to wear a camisole and short pants.

Seeing this scenery made me almost think that the events of the school festival had been nothing more than a dream.

I took the bento box from Haruna, and then realized that she was holding onto another bento box.

What was up with that other one? But before I could ask, Haruna went right into the living room.

“I made too much so go ahead and eat this.”

Haruna’s face was flushed red as she handed Yuu the bento.

... She was giving Yuu a bento? Yuu couldn’t leave the house. I had no idea why she would do that, but Sera began to chuckle.

“Haruna, what happened to my share?”

Sera said that in a teasing tone with a broad grin on her face. It really didn’t look like she wanted a bento. Ah, I see. Haruna had gotten a taste of what it was like to have Yuu’s powers. She understood how painful an experience it was.

So, she wanted to do something for Yuu. And that something was probably this bento.

Thank you. = “Haruna, I loooove you~~!!”

“Hey, you all... did you enjoy the school festival?”

Chris had stolen Haruna’s magical energy, there was a huge storm, and plenty of other things had happened. Haruna also had to keep her emotions in check, so were people really able to enjoy themselves?

“Well, whether I had fun or not, it was quite interesting. Especially all the perverts.”

Seems like she did have fun.

“It wasn’t fun at all!! Next time we’re definitely gonna do a SWAT café, okay?! I’ll set it up for all the classes!”

It seemed that she had so much fun that she wanted to participate next year too.

Tap tap. I heard two taps on the table. When I looked at Yuu...

It was the most fun I have had in my life.

The minute Haruna caught sight of what Yuu had written...

“Actually... I did have a lot of fun.”

“You spent most of the time selling CDs though.”

“Hey! Everyone has fun in their own way! So, what about Ayumu?”

"I... well, hmm. It was..... cute, I guess."

"Disgusting! Just go and disappear please!"

Sera spat that out at me angrily. Geez, I've started even finding her angry side pretty cute.

"Yeah! Hurry up and go to school! And you, gloomy necromancer! Hurry up and eat!"

Yuu opened her bento. Inside was... a truly extravagant looking New Year's banquet.

It was an amazing bento. And if those were the leftovers...

I usually waited anxiously for lunchtime before opening these boxes, but I couldn't help but take a peek right there.

"Hey you! Idiot! Don't open it now!"

Haruna sounded pretty frantic. Today's bento was... a solid block of bonito.²

"Wait, *these* are the leftovers, aren't they?!"

"Ugh!"

Haruna pushed me to the front door and kicked me outside. She threw me my shoes and even locked the door behind me. Geez. I guess I should go find a chisel to get at some of those bonito flakes...

Everyone wanted to just keep at this pace, living their days peacefully and lazily.

² A type of fish, which is usually dried and turned into flakes, and then sprinkled on top of food.

But, I... I wanted to chase after Chris.

No matter what I had to do, I would make her pay for what she'd done.

I would do something about this destiny of ours.

Epilogue: Part 2

Mondays were always the laziest school days.

And on this Monday, the Monday after our school's big annual event, a sense of exhaustion was floating around our classroom.

The classroom was quiet. This... this was exactly what autumn felt like.

"And then, Aikawa! Then Kanami--"

But there was one person who was as energetic as always.

I turned my gaze outside the window, wondering whether Saras was safe or not. I just let Tomonori's voice wash over me.

"Hey, Aikawa. Are you listening?"

"Yeah..."

Now that I thought about it, what were they going to do about our homeroom teacher? Don't tell me Chris was going to show up again looking like an old man? Haha, if she did that I'd punch her right in the face.

The homeroom chime rang and Tomonori gave me a disappointed look.

"Ahh, it's already time. I'll be back for lunch!"

"Okay..."

I couldn't do anything but give back a blank response.

I kept that blank expression on my face as I thought about how to look for Chris, when...

Clatter clatter.

“Alright, everyone take your seats~.”

A poorly shaven guy in a white lab coat came into the classroom. My eyes widened.

Why... why was that guy... And I thought that I was probably the only person surprised at this man’s appearance.

However, there was one person who was even more shocked.

That person lost her previously energetic smile, and just stood there in a stupor. And then, she mumbled.

“Why... our old chief was supposed to be dead...”

Chief? Dead?

... You’re kidding, right? That guy... that screwed-up guy... he was the vampire ninja chief?

“If you don’t belong in this class, go back to your own~~.”

“Tomonori, Tomonori...”

I shook Tomonori as she just blankly stared at the poorly shaven man.

“Ah! Aikawa...”

“Just go back to your classroom for now.”

“O-Okay... yeah, I should... haha, I was just thinking about how he looked like someone I knew...”

Tomonori let out a single dry laugh and then walked out of the room with long strides.

I could tell that she was trying to cover up her shock, but I didn't try to dig any deeper.

When everyone had sat back down, the man in the white lab coat stood up at the teacher's podium and swept his gaze across the students, checking them one by one.

The minute his gaze met mine, he gave me a smile and picked up the chalk.

“Umm, Kurisu-sensei had to visit his parents suddenly because of a family emergency, so I'll be temporarily filling in.”

He turned around and rolled up his white sleeves.

“My name is...”

He drew a horizontal line on the board with the chalk, and then started to draw a vertical line... and then spat up blood.

“Ugh! My doctor ordered me to not use chalk...”

You! Quit being a teacher right now!

“Sensei? Sensei!”

A stir rose through the classroom. Nobody really knew how to handle a situation like this.

“Ah, I’m going to go to the nurse’s office for a bit. Not feeling too well.”

I stood up and walked over to the man in the lab coat.

“It’s that hentai Aikawa.” “Don’t tell me he wants to go to the nurse’s office to do hentai things.” “Ah, but he’s a pretty considerate hentai, isn’t he?”

I heard whispers all around me. It seemed like after that wedding dress and that mannequin, people had started thinking of me as a hentai.

But even if weird rumors were getting spread about me, I had no intention of apologizing.

After all, there were a ridiculous number of things I had to ask this person.

I lent him my shoulder and left the room with calls of “hentai, hentai” hitting me from behind. And then, I asked him in a somewhat firm voice.

“You... who the hell are you exactly?”

The white-coated man leant heavily on me, and I used my zombie power to somehow support him as we walked down the hall. The nurse’s office was on the first floor, and the man answered me when we were headed down the stairs.

“Your ally.”

“And I should believe that?”

We slowly went down the stairs, step by step. I don’t know if he was making any effort to keep himself standing, but he was extremely heavy.

“So, what did you come here for? You don’t look like the kind of person who’d want to be a teacher.”

“Aikawa Ayumu-kun, when I appeared to you at the school festival, it was to see how well you could handle the masou weapon.”

“... Ah. That’s what I thought. So those wash basins...”

“As you might have guessed, that was my trap, Aikawa Ayumu-kun.”

So this guy was the one who called Tomonori out. He wanted to test how effective that ring was at controlling Vinaigrette, and also whether I could truly stop the masou weapon... that’s what I guessed, at least.

When we got to the nurse’s office, I saw that nobody was inside. Well, there weren’t many people who got sick so early in the morning, so the nurse would’ve probably been surprised we had shown up. But that’s great. We could talk in peace now.

“So, who exactly are you? Tomonori said you were the vampire ninja chief.”

“Correct. That’s exactly right.”

He said that with a smile, and then plopped himself down onto a bed while still spitting out blood. I continued my questions as I listened to the bed creak.

“... Are you, by any chance, a zombie just like me?”

“No. Eucliwood would not make me into a zombie.”

“Well, that’s good then.”

“A hundred years ago, I led a few hundred vampire ninjas into Virie.

In order to ensure that Ariel's coup d'état was successful."

Ariel... he was talking about Dai-sensei? I knew that Dai-sensei was trying for a coup d'état, but what did she have to do with the chief of the vampire ninjas?

"... Why?"

"We were childhood friends. Me and Ariel..."

Childhood friends? Now that I thought about it, the person who made the masou weapon wasn't Dai-sensei, but was a man who was her childhood friend. And... that man was...

"In Virie, I was called the Demon Baron."

His hands were folded and his elbows resting on his slightly open legs. And certainly right now, he had called himself a demon baron.

The chief of the vampire ninjas was the demon baron?

This was the person Sera and Tomonori were looking for? Who Haruna looked up to?

And... the person who had directly drunk Yuu's blood.

I see. This is why he could've hidden the masou weapon in another vampire ninja like Tomonori.

"So, why exactly did someone as important as that decide to show his face now of all times?"

"Because Chris has revived. We have to kill her before she regains her full strength."

I see. Chris had mentioned that she also had participated in the coup d'état and lost to the queen.

"Wait just a second. So you had Dai-sensei have the same goal? Well, that's a good thing for me, I do believe."

"Everyone who was defeated by the queen was cursed. My curse puts me on the verge of death at all times."

So that's why he was always spitting up blood?

"Ah yes, Aikawa Ayumu-kun. I have a message for you. 'Are you worried about me? If you aren't I'll kill you.' End of message."

"That unreasonable tone of voice... don't tell me... Saras?"

"Yes, Sarasvati. I saved her a second before she was about to be killed by Chris."

"I see. It was you, wasn't it? The person who saved me."

"Correct. Exactly. Seeing you trying to hold onto that chainsaw so desperately, I just couldn't help but save you. I had wanted to save you earlier... if Chris doesn't think you're dead, then she'll chase you to the ends of the Earth. So that's why I waited for that timing."

I see. Certainly, Chris had been acting as if she had killed Saras.

"I see. That pitch black space is part of your ability, isn't it? Now that I remember it, you can move from shadow to shadow, right? Did you save Saras the same way? I... have to thank you."

"Getting thanked by another guy doesn't make me that happy though."

He scratched his head and smiled.

“Hm? But it doesn’t seem to me that Dai-sensei was cursed at all.”

“Yes, let’s get back on topic. That’s the biggest problem.”

The Demon Baron let out a deep sigh and shook his head.

“I can’t see where this is going.”

“The curse that was supposed to be placed on her... was placed on Chris instead. The queen thought Chris was the ringleader.”

“Well, if people said she was the strongest masou shoujo, then I guess that makes sense. So what...?”

“Do you not understand? Chris’s revenge... is not directed at the queen.”

Wait... don’t tell me...

“She’s going after... Dai-sensei?”

The Demon Baron smiled smugly. “Correct,” he said, before coughing up a huge amount of blood.

I had completely forgotten that this guy’s doctor had ordered him to not give spoilers.

END CHAPTER 4.

END VOLUME 4.

Afterword

Everyone, good evening. This is Kimura Shinichi. Well, time sure flies, doesn't it? Kore wa Zombie desu ka? is now celebrating its first full year.

This was all thanks to the people who bought this book. Thank you very much.

Now then, I'm still a hopeless amateur and I'm showing no signs of improvement... but I even got a kouhai now, so as a pro I'll just have to try my best and do my work proudly, right?!

Well, that's what I'd like to say to try and get focused, but...

On a fundamental level, what exactly is a pro's work? At least, for someone as stupid as me, I found myself thinking about that a lot.

While I had that on my mind, they told me they were going to record our drama CD, which I realized I had to go for. I was a bit worried that I was going to be just in the way, but I gratefully took the opportunity to join them.

And that recording was... well, it was seriously just incredible.

There was Mizubara Kaoru-san, who I'm now following very closely, there's Tamura Yukari-san, who I've been a big fan of ever since hearing "Watashi-tachi, Tobimasu!" on the radio, and Itou Shizuka-san, whose ability to say the word "disgusting" just was unbeatable by anybody else.

And everyone did an absolutely incredible job.

Geez. Everyone was just soooooo cute. These were all idols, dammit. Idols.

But who was the most incredible was the audio director. He was so handsome I thought he would fit right in with the band Chemistry, but he was also just amazing.

As I nervously flipped through the screenplays we were handed, the recording immediately began.

“Well then, as a test let’s start from episode one.”

It was a voice test. Ahh, everyone’s voice was just way too good... it was just perfect. I listened to all their beautiful voices while covering my mouth so that nobody would realize I was smiling so much.

But, the audio director turned to me and said this:

“Hm, I think Sera should sound a bit more cool, and maybe we can get a bit more variation into her voice. What do you think?”

What... did he just say...?

“Well, I think everyone was just perfect though...”

“Hmm, I think it’d be better if she were a bit cooler sounding though.”

“I think it’s fine right now. Ah, but could we try it a bit cooler and see how it feels like?”

So, we did it again. And then... wow. It was better than before.

“Which one was better?”

“This one... please, let’s go with this one.”

Like that, he meticulously instructed the talent on how to play each character.

And then, the real recording. We went through a full episode of dialogue.

This was once again perfect, and made me feel that my presence here was utterly unnecessary. Seriously, I couldn't say anything about that. But...

"Ehh, Haruna-san, take a look at your second line on page four..."

They had to do it over...? But it was perfect! That was definitely perfect!

Don't tell me... after just hearing everything once, he was going to pick out an issue on every page?!

"Next, Haruna-san. Another line on the same page..."

It wasn't just one on each page either! Was he going to try to make them redo every part he found fault with?!

"Try to speak a bit higher and faster-" Huh? That sounded really hard.

"Alright, understood." She could do it?!

"Make it sound something like it's a girl coming out of a boy's body-" What the hell did that even mean?!

"Okay. Understood." She could do it?!

The audio director wouldn't take any compromises. And, all the seiyuu answered his wishes. I was the only one standing there thinking "can she really do that?" or "I thought that was perfect already."

Was this... what they called a pro's work? To never compromise and respond to someone's wishes.

Like that, the high-quality recording proceeded... wow, Noto is really cute, Noto is.

To be quite honest, I came here for the recording so I could meet the female seiyuu.

The people lending their voices to the heroines all had just lovely voices, and it became truly a night to remember.

But... that made me want to say it even more! It made me want to shout it to the heavens! The male seiyuu were also great!

There was Inada Tooru-san as the gorilla, and all the other jolly people giving us our background chatter. They were all great!

The first episode. Because of Haruna, Ayumu has to go and defeat an entire other dojo. It was the scene when the disciples attacked, and Inada-san and all the others were yelling to liven up the scene, when someone suddenly said this:

"Wait, did you hear Choushuu Riki in there?"¹

Really? I must've missed that. And then, the disciples began to laugh.

"Did you just hear Ashura Man?"²

This time, I could tell too. There was definitely one person who was imitating Ashura Man.

¹ Pro wrestler.

² From the manga Kinniku Man.

And then, once again, when Ayumu was fighting the disciples... yeah, there he was! Choushuu was there!

For the people who bought the Drama CD, and for the people who are thinking of buying it, definitely look for Choushuu Riki and Ashura Man.

Normally, I wouldn't listen too hard to the background voices in something like this... but maybe even in other works there were people in the background playing around a bit like this.

They sure were doing a lot to make sure that the people who bought this small part of the story were in for a treat.

I was also truly impressed by the acting power of Takahashi Shinya-san, who played Orito, and the soothing voice of Terashima Takuma-san, who played Ayumu. And the narrator, Taraki Fumihito-san! He was the real deal.

Tachiki-san was going to play the narrator? My heart was fluttering.

"It doesn't matter what the ending is. If Tachiki-san says 'And they lived happily ever after' at the end, then the ending is a good one."

The audio director said that. What did that mean?!

"And they lived happily ever after!"

They didn't seem happy at all! That sounded so wrong! And yet... it was so good!

Because of all these inside stories, I really want everyone to be able to hear this drama CD.

But really, this was truly a day when I saw exactly what it meant to be doing a "pro's work."

I returned home and to my own work. The New Year was approaching, so the work started to pile up, and after a truly exhausting time I managed to submit my manuscript. I wonder if that manuscript was a good one.

As a reward, I got to feast my eyes on the illustrations of Kobuichi-san and Muririn-san, who I'm sure had much busier schedules than I had. Whoa! What was this?! These were way too cute!

It must've been insanely difficult to design a new character while having so much other work to do. But, look at this quality! Was this also what it meant to be a pro? When I got the cover illustration, it was amazing enough to leave me speechless. That little animal accessory attached to her head was also so cute!

This design was probably Muririn-san's doing, wasn't it? Kobuichi-san's drawings with their smart designs and detailed angles were also really cute. Those two really were excellent at what they did.

Ah... speaking of illustrations, it seems like *Kore wa Zombie Desu ka?* is getting a manga!

How generous must they have been to think of drawing this queer work into a manga?

... Wait a second. Kobuichi-san and Muririn-san were top-tier artists.

Could whoever was doing the manga really bring that much cuteness out of the art? But the minute I thought that, I got a copy of the rough draft of Sacchi-san's *Kore wa Zombie Desu ka?* manga.

Amazing! He took an incomprehensibly random character like Ayumu and made him look just like a real protagonist!

Haruna was also spunky, and I could've sworn that Sera's breasts looked bigger.

But most importantly...

Yuu was soooooooooo cute! These heroines were even cuter than they were in the novel!

The Megalo were also cute in a different way than in the novels, and they were great. I hope everyone will take a look if they get a chance!

These people drew so well, didn't they? As expected from pros. Once this work went to other media, I got a glimpse at just how amateurish I was. Could I... could I also do a pro's work like these people?

Ah, my manager is calling me.

"Ah, thanks for your hard work."

"To you too. Thank you for submitting your manuscript. It was good."

"Thank you very much. I guess this means I'm also a pro--"

"So, I need to talk to you about this part here at the start... and this other part here... and next..."

Here talking to me was another pro who wouldn't compromise. I should take a leaf out of those seiyuu's books and go "Understood."

"Ehh, but even if you say that... well, umm..."

... Nope. I couldn't say it.

And so, this volume of Kore wa Zombie Desu ka? was brought to you all by professionals, except for me. I hope to one day also be able to hold myself up proudly as one of those pros, so please continue to support me in the future!

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Last, to everyone who got this book, to Kibuichi-san and Muririn-san. To Marine Entertainment, which allowed this work to be made into a drama CD, and to everyone who took part in that endeavor. To Sacchi-san, who took on the task of making the manga of this work. And to Morioka-san, my manager.

My feelings of gratitude towards you all just grow stronger and stronger each and every day. From the bottom of my heart, thank you very much.

- December 2009, Kimura Shinichi

*There are currently no plans to actually sell Haruna's songs that were displayed on the color illustrations at the start of this volume.

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